

EVELYN WAUGH'S *DECLINE AND FALL* - PT 1

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*TO
HAROLD ACTON,
IN HOMAGE AND AFFECTION*

PRELUDE

MR. SNIGGS, the Junior Dean, and Mr. Postlethwaite, the Domestic Bursar, sat alone in Mr. Sniggs' room overlooking the garden quad at Scone College. From the rooms of Sir Alastair Digby-Vaine-Trumington, two staircases away, came a confused roaring and breaking of glass. They alone of the senior members of Scone were at home that evening, for it was the night of the annual dinner of the Bollinger Club. The others were all scattered over Boar's Hill and North Oxford at gay, contentious little parties, or at other senior common-rooms, or at the meetings of learned societies, for the annual Bollinger dinner is a difficult time for those in authority.

It is not accurate to call this an annual event, because quite often the Club is suspended for some years after each meeting. There is tradition behind the Bollinger, it numbers reigning kings among its past members. At the last dinner, three years ago, a fox had been brought in in a cage and stoned to death with champagne bottles. What an evening that had been! This was the first meeting since then, and from all over Europe old members had rallied for the occasion. For two days they had been pouring into Oxford: epileptic royalty from their villas of exile, uncouth peers from crumbling country seats; smooth young men of uncertain tastes from embassies and legations, illiterate lairds from wet granite hovels in the Highlands, ambitious young barristers and Conservative

candidates torn from the London season and the indelicate advances of debutantes; all that was most sonorous of name and title was there for the beano.

"The fines!" said Mr. Sniggs, gently rubbing his pipe along the side of his nose, "Oh my, the fines there'll be after this evening!"

There is some highly prized port in the senior common-room cellars that is only brought up when the College fines have reached £50.

"We shall have a week of it at least," said Mr. Postlethwaite, "a week of Founder's port."

A shriller note could now be heard rising from Sir Alastair's rooms, any who have heard that sound will shrink at the recollection of it; it is the sound of the English county families baying for broken glass. Soon they would all be tumbling out into the quad, crimson and roaring in their bottle-green evening coats, for the real romp of the evening.

"Don't you think it might be wiser if we turned out the light?" said Mr. Sniggs.

In darkness, the two dons crept to the window. The quad below was a kaleidoscope of dimly-discernible faces.

"There must be fifty of them at least," said Mr. Postlethwaite, "If only they were all members of the College! Fifty of them at ten pounds each. Oh my!"

"It'll be more if they attack the Chapel," said Mr. Sniggs, "Oh, please God, make them attack the Chapel!"

"I wonder who the unpopular undergraduates are this term. They always attack their rooms. I hope they have been wise enough to go out for the evening."

"I think Partridge will be one, he possesses a painting by Matisse or some such name."

"And I'm told he has black sheets in his bed."

"And Sanders went to dinner with Ramsay MacDonald

once."

"And Rending can afford to hunt, but collects chain instead."

"And smokes cigars in the garden after breakfast."

"Austen has a grand piano."

"They'll enjoy smashing that."

"There'll be a heavy bill for to-night, just you see! But I confess I shall feel easier if the Dean or the Master were in. They can't see us from here, can they!?"

It was a lovely evening. They broke up Mr. Austen's grand piano, and stamped Lord Rending's cigars into his carpet, and smashed his china, and tore up Mr. Partridge's sheets, and threw the Matisse into his water-jug. Mr. Sanders had nothing to break except his windows, but they found the manuscript at which he had been working for the Newdigate Prize Poem, and had great fun with that. Sir Alastair Digby-Vaine-Trumpington felt quite ill with excitement, and was supported to bed by Lumsden of Strathdrummond. It was half-past eleven. Soon the evening would come to an end. But there was still a treat to come.

Paul Pennyfeather was reading for the Church. It was his third year of uneventful residence at Scone. He had come there after a creditable career at a small public school of ecclesiastical temper on the South Downs, where he had edited the magazine, been President of the Debating Society, and had, as his report said, "exercised a wholesome influence for good" in the House in which he was head boy. At home he lived in Onslow Square with his guardian, a prosperous solicitor who was proud of his progress and abysmally bored by his company. Both his parents had died in India at the time when he won the essay prize at his preparatory school. For two years he had lived within his allowance, aided by two valuable scholarships. He smoked three ounces of tobacco a week -- John Cotton, Medium -- and drank a pint and a half of beer a day, the half at luncheon and the pint at dinner, a meal he invariably ate in Hall. He had four friends, three of whom had been at school with him.

None of the Bollinger Club had ever heard of Paul Pennyfeather, and he, oddly enough, had not heard of them.

Little suspecting the incalculable consequences that the evening was to have for him, he bicycled happily back from a meeting of the League of Nations Union. There had been a most interesting paper about plebiscites in Poland. He thought of smoking a pipe and reading another chapter of the *Forsyte Saga* before going to bed. He knocked at the gate, was admitted, put away his bicycle, and diffidently, as always, made his way across the quad towards his rooms. What a lot of people there seemed to be about! Paul had no particular objection to drunkenness -- he had read rather a daring paper to the Thomas More Society on the subject -- but he was consumedly shy of drunkards.

Out of the night Lumsden of Strathdrummond swayed across his path like a draïdical rocking-stone. Paul tried to pass.

Now it so happened that the tie of Paul's old school bore a marked resemblance to the pale blue and white of the Bollinger Club. The difference of a quarter of an inch in the width of the stripes was not one that Lumsden of Strathdrummond was likely to appreciate.

"Here's an awful man wearing the Boiler tie," said the Laird. It is not for nothing that since pre-Chnstian times his family has exercised chieftainship over unchartered miles of barren moorland.

Mr. Sniggs was looking rather apprehensively at Mr. Postlethwaite.

"They appear to have caught somebody," he said. "I hope they don't do him any serious harm."

"Dear me, can it be Lord Rending? I think I ought to intervene."

"No, Sniggs," said Mr. Postlethwaite, laying a hand on his impetuous colleague's arm, "No, no, no. It would be unwise. We have the prestige of the senior common-room to consider. In their present state they might not prove amenable to discipline. We must at all costs avoid

an outrage."

At length the crowd parted, and Mr. Sniggs gave a sigh of relief.

"But it's quite all right. It isn't Rending. It's Penny-feather -- some one of no importance."

"Well, that saves a great deal of trouble. I am glad, Sniggs, I am, really. What a lot of clothes the young man appears to have lost!"

Next morning there was a lovely College meeting.

'Two hundred and thirty pounds," murmured the Domestic Bursar ecstatically, "not counting the damage! That means five evenings, with what we have already collected. Five evenings of Founder's port !"

"The case of Pennyfeather," the Master was saying, "seems to be quite a different matter altogether. He ran the whole length of the quadrangle, you say, without his trousers. It is unseemly. It is more, it is indecent. In fact, I am almost prepared to say that it is flagrantly indecent. It is not the conduct we expect of a scholar."

"Perhaps if we fined him really heavily?" suggested the Junior Dean.

"I very much doubt whether he could pay. I understand he is not well off. Without trousers, indeed! And at that time of night! I think we should do far better to get rid of him altogether. That sort of young man does the College no good."

Two hours later, while Paul was packing his three suits in his little leather trunk, the Domestic Bursar sent a message that he wished to see him.

"Ah, Mr. Pennyfeather," he said, "I have examined your rooms and notice two slight burns, one on the window-sill and the other on the chimney-piece, no doubt from cigarette ends. I am charging you five-and-sixpence for each of them on your battels. That is all, thank you."

As he crossed the quad Paul met Mr. Sniggs.

"Just off ?" said the Junior Dean brightly.

"Yes, sir," said Paul.

And a little further on he met the Chaplain.

"Oh, Pennyfeather, before you go, surely you have my copy of Dean Stanley's 'Eastern Church' ?"

"Yes, I left it on your table."

"Thank you. Well, good-bye, my dear boy I suppose that after that reprehensible affair last night you will have to think of some other profession. Well, you may congratulate yourself that you discovered your unfitness for the priesthood before it was too late. If a parson does a thing of that sort, you know, all the world knows. And so many do, alas. What do you propose doing?"

"I don't really know yet."

"There is always commerce, of course. Perhaps you may be able to bring to the great world of business some of the ideals you have learned at Scone. But it won't be easy, you know It is a thing to be lived down with courage. What did Dr Johnson say about fortitude? Dear, dear, no trousers!"

At the gates Paul tipped the porter.

"Well, good-bye, Blackall," he said, "I don't suppose I shall see you again for some time."

"No, sir, and very sorry I am to hear about it. I expect you'll be becoming a schoolmaster, sir. That's what most of the gentlemen does, sir, that gets sent down for indecent behaviour."

"God damn and blast them all to hell," said Paul meekly to himself as he drove to the station, and then he felt rather ashamed, because he rarely swore.

PART I

CHAPTER I

Vocation

"SENT down for indecent behaviour, eh?" said Paul Pennyfeather's guardian, "Well, thank God your poor father has been spared this disgrace. That's all I can say" There was a hush in Onslow Square, unbroken except by Paul's guardian's daughter's gramophone playing Gilbert and Sullivan in her little pink boudoir at the top of the stairs.

"My daughter must know nothing of this," continued Paul's guardian.

There was another pause.

"Well," he resumed, "you know the terms of your father's will. He left the sum of five thousand pounds, the interest of which was to be devoted to your education and the sum to be absolutely yours on your twenty-first birthday. That, if I am right, falls in eleven months' time. In the event of your education being finished before that time, he left me with complete discretion to withhold this allowance should I not consider your course of life satisfactory. I do not think that I should be fulfilling the trust which your poor father placed in me if, in the present circumstances, I continued any allowance. Moreover, you will be the first to realize how impossible it would be for me to ask you to share the same home with my daughter."

"But what is to happen to me?" said Paul.

"I think you ought to find some work," said his guardian thoughtfully, "Nothing like it for taking the mind off nasty subjects."

"But what kind of work'?"

"Just work, good healthy toil. You have led too sheltered a life, Paul. Perhaps I am to blame. It will do

you the world of good to face facts a bit -- look at life in the raw, you know. See things steadily and see them whole, eh?" And Paul's guardian lit another cigar.

"Have I no legal right to any money at all?" asked Paul.

"None whatever, my dear boy," said his guardian quite cheerfully.

That spring Paul's guardian's daughter had two new evening frocks and, thus glorified, became engaged to a well-conducted young man in the Office of Works.

"Sent down for indecent behaviour, eh?" said Mr. Levy, of Church and Gargoyle, scholastic agents, "Well, I don't think we'll say anything about that. In fact, officially, mind, you haven't told me. We call that sort of thing 'Education discontinued for personal reasons,' you understand?" He picked up the telephone. "Mr. Samson, have we any 'education discontinued' posts, male, on hand? Right! Bring it up, will you? I think," he added, turning again to Paul, "we have just the thing for you."

A young man brought in a slip of paper.

"What about that?"

Paul read it

Private and Confidential Notice of Vacancy
Augustus Fagan, Esquire, Ph D , Llanabba Castle, N
Wales, requires immediately Junior assistant master to teach
Classics and English to University Standard with subsidiary
Mathematics, German, and French Experience essential,
first-class games essential
Status of School School
Salary offered £120 resident post
Reply promptly but carefully to Dr. Fagan ("Esq , Ph D
on envelope), enclosing copies of testimonials and photo-
graph, if considered advisable, mentioning that you have
heard of the vacancy through us.

"Might have been made for you," said Mr. Levy.

"But I don't know a word of German, I've had no

experience, I've got no testimonials, and I can't play cricket."

"It doesn't do to be too modest," said Mr. Levy, "It's wonderful what one can teach when one tries. Why, only last term we sent a man who had never been in a laboratory in his life as senior Science Master to one of our leading public schools. He came wanting to do private coaching in music. He's doing very well, I believe. Besides, Dr Fagan can't expect all that for the salary he's offering. Between ourselves, Llanabba hasn't a good name in the profession. We class schools, you see, into four grades Leading School, First-rate School, Good School, and School. "Frankly," said Mr. Levy, "School is pretty bad I think you'll find it a very suitable post. So far as I know, there are only two other candidates, and one of them is totally deaf, poor fellow."

Next day Paul went to Church and Gargoyle to interview Dr. Fagan. He had not long to wait. Dr. Fagan was already there interviewing the other candidates. After a few minutes Mr. Levy led Paul into the room, introduced him, and left them together

"A most exhausting interview," said Dr. Fagan, "I am sure he was a very nice young man, but I could not make him understand a word I said. Can you hear me quite clearly?"

"Perfectly, thank you"

"Good, then let us get to business"

Paul eyed him shyly across the table. He was very tall and very old and very well dressed, he had sunken eyes and rather long white hair over jet black eyebrows. His head was very long, and swayed lightly as he spoke, his voice had a thousand modulations, as though at some remote tune he had taken lessons in elocution, the backs of his hands were hairy, and his fingers were crooked like claws.

"I understand you have had no previous experience?"

"No, sir, I am afraid not."

"Well, of course, that is in many ways an advantage. One too easily acquires the professional tone and loses vision. But of course we must be practical. I am offering a salary of one hundred and twenty pounds, but only to a man with experience. I have a letter here from a young man who holds a diploma in forestry. He wants an extra ten pounds a year on the strength of it, but it is vision I need, Mr. Pennyfeather, not diplomas. I understand, too, that you left your University rather suddenly. Now -- why was that?"

This was the question that Paul had been dreading, and, true to his training, he had resolved upon honesty.

"I was sent down, sir, for indecent behaviour."

"Indeed, indeed? Well, I shall not ask for details. I have been in the scholastic profession long enough to know that nobody enters it unless he has some very good reason which he is anxious to conceal. But, again to be practical, Mr. Pennyfeather, I can hardly pay one hundred and twenty pounds to anyone who has been sent down for indecent behaviour. Suppose that we firs your salary at ninety pounds a year to begin with? I have to return to Llanabba to-night. There are six more weeks of term, you see, and I have lost a master rather suddenly. I shall expect you to-morrow evening. There is an excellent train from Euston that leaves at about ten I think you will like your work," he continued dreamily, "You will find that my school is built upon an ideal -- an ideal of service and fellowship. Many of the boys come from the very best families. Little Lord Tangent has come to us this term, the Earl of Circumference's son, you know. Such a nice little chap, erratic, of course, like all his family, but he has tone." Dr. Fagan gave a long sigh. "I wish I could say the same for my staff. Between ourselves, Pennyfeather, I think I shall have to get rid of Grimes fairly soon. He is not out of the top drawer, and boys notice these things. Now, your predecessor was a thoroughly agreeable young man. I was sorry to lose him. But he used to wake up my daughters coming back on his motor bicycle at all hours of the night. He used to borrow money from the boys, too, quite large sums, and the parents objected, I had to get rid of him. Still, I was very sorry. He had tone."

Dr. Fagan rose, put on his hat at a jaunty angle, and drew on a glove.

"Good-bye, my dear Pennyfeather I think, in fact I know, that we are going to work well together. I can always tell these things."

"Good-bye, sir," said Paul.

"Five per cent of ninety pounds is four pounds ten shillings," said Mr. Levy cheerfully. "You can pay now or on receipt of your first term's salary. If you pay now there is a reduction of 15 per cent. That would be three pounds six shillings and sixpence"

"I'll pay you when I get my wages," said Paul.

"Just as you please," said Mr. Levy. "Only too glad to have been of use to you"

CHAPTER II

Llanabba Castle

LLANABBA CASTLE presents two quite different aspects, according as you approach it from the Bangor or the coast road. From the back it looks very much like any other large country house, with a great many windows and a terrace, and a chain of glass-houses and the roofs of innumerable nondescript kitchen buddings disappearing into the trees. But from the front -- and that is how it is approached from Llanabba station -- it is formidably feudal, one drives past at least a mile of machicolated wall before reaching the gates; these are towered and turreted and decorated with heraldic animals and a workable portcullis. Beyond them, at the end of the avenue, stands the Castle, a model of mediaeval impregnability. The explanation of this rather striking contrast is simple enough. At the time of the cotton famine in the 'sixties Llanabba House was the property of a prosperous Lancashire millowner. His wife could not bear to think of their men starving, in fact, she and her daughters organized a little bazaar in their aid, though without any very substantial results. Her husband had read the

Liberal economists and could not think of paying without due return. Accordingly, "enlightened self-interest" found a way. An encampment of mill-hands was settled in the park, and they were put to work walling the grounds and facing the house with great blocks of stone from a neighbouring quarry. At the end of the American war they returned to their mills, and Llanabba House became Llanabba Castle after a great deal of work had been done very cheaply.

Driving up from the station in a little closed taxi, Paul saw little of all this. It was almost dark in the avenue and quite dark inside the house.

"I am Mr. Pennyfeather," he said to the butler, "I have come here as a master."

"Yes," said the butler, "I know all about you. This way."

They went down a number of passages, unlit and smelling obscurely of all the ghastly smells of school, until they reached a brightly-lighted door.

"In there. That's the Common Room," Without more ado, the butler made off into the darkness.

Paul looked round It was not a very big room. Even he felt that, and all his life he had been accustomed to living in constricted spaces.

"I wonder how many people live here," he thought, and with a sick thrust of apprehension counted sixteen pipes in a rack at the side of the chimneypiece. Two gowns hung on a hook behind the door. In a corner were some golf clubs, a walking-stick, an umbrella and two miniature rifles. Over the chimneypiece was a green baize notice-board covered with lists, there was a typewriter on the table. In a bookcase were a number of very old text-books and some new exercise-books. There were also a bicycle pump, two armchairs, a straight chair, half a bottle of invalid port, a boxing-glove, a bowler hat, yesterday's Daily News and a packet of pipe-cleaners.

Paul sat down disconsolately on the straight chair. Presently there was a knock at the door, and a small boy came in.

"Oh!" he said, looking at Paul intently.

"Hullo," said Paul.

"I was looking for Captain Grimes," said the little boy.

"Oh," said Paul.

The child continued to look at Paul with a penetrating, impersonal interest.

"I suppose you're the new master?" he said.

"Yes," said Paul "I'm called Pennyfeather."

The little boy gave a shrill laugh, "I think that's terribly funny," he said, and went away.

Presently the door opened again, and two more boys looked in. They stood and giggled for a time and then made off.

In the course of the next half hour six or seven boys appeared on various pretexts and stared at Paul. Then a bell rang, and there was a terrific noise of whistling and scampering. The door opened, and a very short man of about thirty came into the Common Room. He had made a great deal of noise in coming because he had an artificial leg. He had a short red moustache, and was slightly bald.

"Hullo," he said.

"Hullo!" said Paul.

"I'm Captain Grimes," said the newcomer, and, "Come in, you," he added to someone outside.

Another boy came in.

"What do you mean," said Grimes, "by whistling when I told you to stop?"

"Everyone else was whistling," said the boy.

"What's that got to do with it?" said Grimes.

"I should think it had a lot to do with it," said the boy.

"Well, just you do a hundred fines, and next time, remember, I shall beat you," said Grimes, "with this," said Grimes, waving the walking-stick.

"That wouldn't hurt much," said the boy, and went out.

"There's no discipline in the place," said Grimes, and then he went out too.

"I wonder whether I'm going to enjoy being a school-master," thought Paul.

Quite soon another and older man came into the room.

"Hullo," he said to Paul.

"Hullo!" said Paul

"I'm Prendergast," said the newcomer. "Have some port?"

"Thank you, I'd love to."

"Well, there's only one glass."

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter, then."

"You might get your tooth-glass from your bedroom."

"I don't know where that is."

"Oh, well, never mind, we'll have some another night. I suppose you're the new master?"

"Yes"

"You'll hate it here. I know I've been here ten years. Grimes only came this term. He hates it already. Have you seen Grimes?"

"Yes, I think so."

"He isn't a gentleman. Do you smoke?"

"Yes."

"A pipe, I mean."

"Yes."

"Those are my pipes. Remind me to show them to you after dinner."

At this moment the butler appeared with a message that Dr. Fagan wished to see Mr. Pennyfeather.

Dr. Fagan's part of the Castle was more palatial. He stood at the end of a long room with his back to a rococo marble chimneypiece; he wore a velvet dinner-jacket.

"Settling in?" he asked.

"Yes," said Paul

Sitting before the fire, with a glass bottle of sweets in her lap, was a brightly dressed woman in early middle age.

"That," said Dr. Fagan with some disgust, "is my daughter."

"Pleased to meet you," said Miss Fagan, "Now what I always tells the young chaps as comes here is, 'Don't let the dad overwork you.' He's a regular Tartar, is Dad, but then you know what scholars are -- inhuman. Ain't you," said Miss Fagan, turning on her father with sudden ferocity--"ain't you inhuman?"

"At times, my dear, I am grateful for what little detachment I have achieved. But here," he added, "is my other daughter."

Silently, except for a scarcely perceptible jingling of keys, another woman had entered the room. She was younger than her sister, but far less gay.

"How do you do?" she said, "I do hope you have brought some soap with you. I asked my father to tell you, but he so often forgets these things. Masters are not

supplied with soap or with boot polish or with washing over two shillings and sixpence weekly. Do you take sugar in your tea?"

"Yes, usually."

"I will make a note of that and have two extra lumps put out for you. Don't let the boys get them, though."

"I have put you in charge of the fifth form for the rest of this term," said Dr. Fagan. "You will find them delightful boys, quite delightful. Clutterbuck wants watching, by the way, a very delicate little chap. I have also put you in charge of the games, the carpentering class and the fire drill. And I forget, do you teach music?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

"Unfortunate, most unfortunate. I understood from Mr. Levy that you did. I have arranged for you to take Beste-Chetwynde in organ lessons twice a week. Well, you must do the best you can. There goes the bell for dinner. I won't detain you. Oh, one other thing. Not a word to the boys, please, about the reasons for your leaving Oxford! We schoolmasters must temper discretion with deceit. There, I fancy I have said something for you to think about. Good night"

"Tootle-oo," said the elder Miss Fagan.

CHAPTER III

Captain Grimes

PAUL had very little difficulty in finding the dining-hall. He was guided there by the smell of cooking and the sound of voices. It was a large, panelled room, far from disagreeable, with fifty or sixty boys of ages ranging from ten to eighteen settled along four long tables. The smaller ones wore Eton suits, the elder ones dinner-jackets.

He was led to a place at the head of one of the tables. The boys on either side of him stood up very politely until

he sat down. One of them was the boy who had whistled at Captain Grimes. Paul thought he rather liked him.

"I'm called Beste-Chetwynde," he said.

"I've got to teach you the organ, I believe."

"Yes, it's great fun we play in the village church. Do you play terribly well?"

Paul felt this was not a moment for candour, and so, tempering discretion with deceit, he said, "Yes, remarkably well"

"I say, do you really, or are you rotten?"

"Indeed, I'm not. I used to give lessons to the Master of Scone."

"Well, you won't be able to teach me much," said Beste-Chetwynde cheerfully. "I only do it to get off gym. I say, they haven't given you a napkin. These servants are too awful Philbrick," he shouted to the butler, "why haven't you given Mr. Pennyfeather a napkin?"

"Forgot," said Philbrick, "and it's too late because Miss Fagan's locked the linen up."

"Nonsense," said Beste-Chetwynde, "go and get one at once. That man's all right, really," he added, "only he wants watching."

In a few minutes, Philbrick returned with the napkin.

"It seems to me that you're a remarkably intelligent boy," said Paul

"Captain Grimes doesn't think so. He says I'm half-witted. I'm glad you're not like Captain Grimes. He's so common, don't you think?"

"You mustn't talk about the other masters like that in front of me."

"Well, that's what we all think about him, anyway. What's more, he wears combinations. I saw it in his

washing-book one day when I was fetching him his hat. I think combinations are rather awful, don't you?"

There was a commotion at the end of the hall.

"I expect that's Clutterbuck being sick," said Beste-Chetwynde. "He's usually sick when we have mutton." The boy on Paul's other side now spoke for the first time.

"Mr. Prendergast wears a wig," he said, and then became very confused and subsided into a giggle.

"That's Briggs," said Beste-Chetwynde, "only everyone calls him Brolly, because of the shop, you know."

"They're silly rotters," said Briggs.

All this was a great deal easier than Paul had expected, it didn't seem so very hard to get on with boys, after all. After a time they all stood up, and amid considerable noise, Mr. Prendergast said grace. Someone called out "Prendy," very loudly just by Paul's ear.

"per Christum Dominum nostrum Amen," said Mr. Prendergast, "Beste-Chetwynde, was that you who made that noise?"

"Me, sir? No, sir."

"Pennyfeather, did Beste-Chetwynde make that noise?"

"No, I don't think so," said Paul, and Beste-Chetwynde gave him a friendly look, because, as a matter of fact, he had.

Captain Grimes linked arms with him outside the dining-hall.

"Filthy meal, isn't it, old boy?" he said.

"Pretty bad," said Paul.

"Prendy's on duty to-night I'm off to the pub. How about you?"

"All right," said Paul.

"Prendy's not so bad in his way," said Grimes, "but he can't keep order. Of course, you know he wears a wig. Very hard for a man with a wig to keep order. I've got a false leg, but that's different. Boys respect that. Think I lost it in the war. Actually," said the Captain, "and strictly between ourselves, mind, I was run over by a tram in Stoke-on-Trent when I was one-over-the-eight. Still, it doesn't do to let that out to every one. Funny thing, but I feel I can trust you I think we're going to be pals."

"I hope so," said Paul.

"I've been feeling the need of a pal for some time. The bloke before you wasn't bad -- a bit stand-offish, though. He had a motor-bike, you see. The daughters of the house didn't care for him. Have you met Miss Fagan?"

"I've met two."

"They're both bitches," said Grimes, and added moodily, "I'm engaged to be married to Flossie."

"Good God! Which is she?"

"The elder. The boys call them Flossie and Dingy. We haven't told the old boy yet. I'm waiting till I land in the soup again. Then I shall play that as my last card. I generally get into the soup sooner or later. Here's the pub. Not such a bad little place in its way. Clutterbuck's father makes all the beer round here. Not bad stuff, either. Two pints, please, Mrs. Roberts!"

In the further corner sat Philbrick, talking volubly in Welsh to a shady-looking old man.

"Damned cheek his coming in here!" said Grimes.

Mrs. Roberts brought them their beer. Grimes took a long draught and sighed happily.

"This looks like being the first end of term I've seen for two years," he said dreamily. "Funny thing, I can always get on all right for about six weeks, and then I land in the soup. I don't believe I was ever meant by Nature to be a

schoolmaster. Temperament," said Grimes, with a far-away look in his eyes --"that's been my trouble, temperament and sex."

"Is it quite easy to get another job after -- after you've been in the soup?" asked Paul.

"Not at first, it isn't, but there're ways. Besides, you see I'm a public-school man. That means everything. There's a blessed equity in the English social system," said Grimes, "that ensures the public-school man against starvation. One goes through four or five years of perfect hell at an age when life is bound to be hell, anyway, and after that the social system never lets one down.

"Not that I stood four or five years of it, mind, I got the push soon after my sixteenth birthday. But my house-master was a public-school man. He knew the system 'Grimes,' he said, 'I can't keep you in the House after what has happened. I have the other boys to consider. But I don't want to be too hard on you. I want you to start again.' So he sat down there and then and wrote me a letter of recommendation to any future employer, a corking good letter, too. I've got it still. It's been very useful at one time or another. That's the public-school system all over. They may kick you out, but they never let you down.

"I subscribed a guinea to the War Memorial Fund. I felt I owed it to them. I was really sorry," said Grimes, "that that cheque never got through"

"After that I went into business. Uncle of mine had a brush factory at Edmonton. Doing pretty well before the war. That put the lid on the brush trade for me. You're too young to have been in the war, I suppose? Those were days, old boy. We shan't see the like of them again. I don't suppose I was really sober for more than a few hours for the whole of that war. Then I got into the soup again, pretty badly that time. Happened over in France. They said, 'Now, Grimes, you've got to behave like a gentleman. We don't want a court-martial in this regiment. We're going to leave you alone for half an hour. There's your revolver. You know what to do. Good-bye, old man,' they said quite affectionately.

"Well, I sat there for some time looking at that revolver. I put it up to my head twice, but each time I brought it down again. 'Public-school men don't end like this,' I said to myself. It was a long half hour, but luckily they had left a decanter of whisky in there with me. They'd all had a few, I think. That's what made them all so solemn. There wasn't much whisky left when they came back, and, what with that and the strain of the situation, I could only laugh when they came in. Silly thing to do, but they looked so surprised, seeing me there alive and drunk.

" 'The man's a cad,' said the colonel, but even then I couldn't stop laughing, so they put me under arrest and called a court-martial."

"I must say I felt pretty low next day. A major came over from another battalion to try my case. He came to see me first, and bless me if it wasn't a cove I'd known at school."

" 'God bless my soul,' he said, 'if it isn't Grimes of Podger's! What's all this nonsense about a court-martial?' So I told him 'H'm,' he said, 'pretty bad. Still, it's out of the question to shoot an old Harrovian I'll see what I can do about it ' And next day I was sent to Ireland on a pretty cushy job connected with postal service. That saw me out as far as the war was concerned. You can't get into the soup in Ireland, do what you like. I don't know if all this bores you?"

"Not at all," said Paul "I think it's most encouraging."

"I've been in the soup pretty often since then, but never quite so badly. Someone always turns up and says, 'I can't see a public-school man down and out. Let me put you on your feet again.' I should think," said Grimes, "I've been put on my feet more often than any living man."

Philbrick came across the bar parlour towards them.

"Feeling lonely?" he said, "I've been talking to the stationmaster here, and if either of you wants an introduction to a young lady."

"Certainly not," said Paul.

"Oh, all right," said Philbrick, making off.

"Women are an enigma," said Grimes, "as far as Grimes is concerned."

CHAPTER IV

Mr. Prendergast

PAUL was awakened next morning by a loud bang on his door, and Beste-Chetwynde looked in. He was wearing a very expensive-looking Charvet dressing-gown.

"Good morning, sir," he said, "I thought I'd come and tell you, as you wouldn't know, there's only one bathroom for the masters. If you want to get there before Mr. Prendergast, you ought to go now. Captain Grimes doesn't wash much," he added, and then disappeared. Paul went to the bath and was rewarded some minutes later by hearing the shuffling of slippers down the passage and the door furiously rattled.

As he was dressing, Philbrick appeared.

"Oh, I forgot to call you. Breakfast is in ten minutes."

After breakfast Paul went up to the Common Room. Mr. Prendergast was there polishing his pipes, one by one, with a chamois leather. He looked reproachfully at Paul.

"We must come to some arrangement about the bathroom," he said, "Grimes very rarely has a bath. I have one before breakfast."

"So do I," said Paul defiantly.

"Then I suppose I shall have to find some other time," said Mr. Prendergast, and he gave a deep sigh as he returned his attention to his pipes, "After ten years, too," he added, "but everything's like that I might have known you'd want the bath. It was so easy when there was only Grimes and that other young man. He was never down

m time for breakfast. Oh dear' oh dear' I can see that things are going to be very difficult."

"But surely we could both have one?"

"No, no, that's out of the question. It's all part of the same thing. Everything has been like this since I left the ministry."

Paul made no answer, and Mr. Prendergast went on breathing and rubbing.

"I expect you wonder how I came to be here?"

"No, no," said Paul soothingly. "I think it's very natural."

"It's not natural at all, it's most unnatural. If things had happened a little differently, I should be a rector with my own house and bathroom. I might even have been a rural dean, only" -- and Mr. Prendergast dropped his voice to a whisper -- "only I had Doubts."

"I don't know why I'm telling you all this, nobody else knows. I somehow feel you'll understand."

"Ten years ago I was a clergyman of the Church of England. I had just been presented to a living in Worth-ing. It was such an attractive church, not old, but very beautifully decorated, six candles on the altar, Reservation in the Lady Chapel, and an excellent heating apparatus which burned coke in a little shed by the sacristy door, no graveyard, just a hedge of golden privet between the church and the rectory."

"As soon as I moved in, my mother came to keep house for me. She bought some chintz, out of her own money, for the drawing-room curtains. She used to be 'at home' once a week to the ladies of the congregation. One of them, the dentist's wife, gave me a set of the Encyclopedia Britanmca for my study. It was all very pleasant until my Doubts began."

"Were they as bad as all that?" asked Paul.

"They were insuperable," said Mr. Prendergast, "that

is why I am here now. But I expect I am boring you."

"No, do go on. That's to say, unless you find it painful to think about."

"I think about it all the time. It happened like this, quite suddenly. We had been there about three months, and my mother had made great friends with some people called Bundle -- rather a curious name. I think he was an insurance agent until he retired. Mrs. Bundle used very kindly to ask us in to supper on Sundays after Evensong. They were pleasant informal gatherings, and I used quite to look forward to them. I can see them now as they sat there on this particular evening, there was my mother and Mr. and Mrs. Bundle, and their son, rather a spotty boy, I remember, who used to go in to Brighton College by tram every day, and Mrs. Bundle's mother, a Mrs. Crump, rather deaf, but a very good Churchwoman, and Mrs. Abel -- that was the name of the dentist's wife who gave me the Encyclopedia Britannica -- and old Major Ending, the people's warden. I had preached two sermons that day besides taking the children's Bible-class in the afternoon, and I had rather dropped out of the conversation. They were all talking away quite happily about the preparations that were being made on the pier for the summer season, when suddenly, for no reason at all, my Doubts began." He paused, and Paul felt constrained to offer some expression of sympathy.

"What a terrible thing," he said.

"Yes, I've not known an hour's real happiness since. You see, it wasn't the ordinary sort of Doubt about Cain's wife or the Old Testament miracles or the consecration of Archbishop Parker. I'd been taught how to explain all those while I was at college. No, it was something deeper than all that. I couldn't understand why God had made the world at all. There was my mother and the Bundles and Mrs. Crump talking away quite unconcernedly while I sat there wrestling with this sudden assault of doubt. You see how fundamental that is. Once granted the first step, I can see that everything else follows -- Tower of Babel, Babylonian captivity, Incarnation, Church, bishops, incense, everything -- but what I couldn't see, and what I can't see now, is, why did it all begin?"

"I asked my bishop, he didn't know. He said that he didn't think the point really arose as far as my practical duties as a parish priest were concerned. I discussed it with my mother. At first she was inclined to regard it as a passing phase. But it didn't pass, so finally she agreed with me that the only honourable thing to do was to resign my living, she never really recovered from the shock, poor old lady. It was a great blow after she had bought the chintz and got so friendly with the Bundles."

A bell began ringing down a distant passage.

"Well, well, we must go to prayers, and I haven't finished my pipes." He took his gown from the peg behind the door and slipped it over his shoulders.

"Perhaps one day I shall see Light," he said, "and then I shall go back to the ministry. Meanwhile -- "

Clutterbuck ran past the door, whistling hideously.

"That's a nasty little boy," said Mr. Prendergast, "if ever there was one."

Chapter V

Discipline

PRAYERS were held downstairs in the main hall of the Castle. The boys stood ranged along the panelled walls, each holding in his hands a little pile of books. Grimes sat on one of the chairs beside the baronial chimneypiece.

"Morning," he said to Paul, "only just down, I'm afraid. Do I smell of drink?"

"Yes," said Paul.

"Comes of missing breakfast. Prendy been telling you about his Doubts?"

"Yes," said Paul.

"Funny thing," said Gnmes,"but I've never been worried in that way. I don't pretend to be a particularly pious sort of chap, but I've never had any Doubts. When you've been in the soup as often as I have, it gives you a sort of feeling that everything's for the best, really. You know, God's in His heaven, all's right with the world. I can't quite explain it, but I don't believe one can ever be unhappy for long provided one does just exactly what one wants to and when one wants to. The last chap who put me on my feet said I was 'singularly in harmony with the primitive promptings of humanity.' I've remembered that phrase because somehow it seemed to fit me. Here comes the old man. This is where we stand up."

As the bell stopped ringing, Dr. Fagan swept into the hall, the robes of a Doctor of Philosophy swelling and billowing about him. He wore an orchid in his button-hole.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said.

"Good morning, sir," chorused the boys.

The Doctor advanced to the table at the end of the room, picked up a Bible, and opening it at random, read a chapter of blood-curdling military history without any evident relish. From that he plunged into the Lord's prayer, which the boys took up in a quiet chatter. Prendergast's voice led them in tones that testified to his ecclesiastical past.

Then the Doctor glanced at a sheet of notes he held in his hand. "Boys," he said,"I have some announcements to make. The Fagan cross-country running challenge cup will not be competed for this year on account of the floods."

"I expect the old boy has popped it," said Grimes in Paul's ear

"Nor will the Llanabba Essay Prize."

"On account of the floods," said Grimes.

"I have received my account for the telephone," proceeded Dr. Fagan,"and I find that during the past quarter

there have been no less than twenty-three trunk calls to London, none of which was sent by me or by members of my family. I look to the prefects to stop this, unless of course they are themselves responsible, in which case I must urge them in my own interests to make use of the village post-office, to which they have access.

"I think that is everything, isn't it, Mr. Prendergast?"

"Cigars," said Mr. Prendergast in a stage whisper.

"Ah yes, cigars. Boys, I have been deeply distressed to learn that several cigar ends have been found --' where have they been found?"

"Boiler-room."

"In the boiler-room. I regard this as reprehensible. What boy has been smoking cigars in the boiler-room?"

There was a prolonged silence, during which the Doctor's eye travelled down the line of boys.

"I will give the culprit until luncheon to give himself up. If I do not hear from him by then the whole school will be heavily punished."

"Damn!" said Grimes, "I gave those cigars to Clutterbuck. I hope the little beast has the sense to keep quiet."

"Go to your classes," said the Doctor.

The boys filed out.

"I should think, by the look of them, they were exceedingly cheap cigars," added Mr. Prendergast sadly. "They were a pale yellow colour."

"That makes it worse," said the Doctor. "To think of any boy under my charge smoking pale yellow cigars in a boiler-room! It is not a gentlemanly fault"

The masters went upstairs.

"That's your little mob in there," said Grimes, "you let them out at eleven."

"But what am I to teach them?" said Paul in sudden panic.

"Oh, I shouldn't try to teach them anything, not just yet, anyway Just keep them quiet."

"Now that's a thing I've never learned to do," sighed Mr. Prendergast.

Paul watched him amble into his classroom at the end of the passage, where a burst of applause greeted his arrival. Dumb with terror he went into his own classroom.

Ten boys sat before him, their hands folded, their eyes bright with expectation.

"Good morning, sir," said the one nearest him.

"Good morning," said Paul.

"Good morning, sir," said the next.

"Good morning," said Paul.

"Good morning, sir," said the next.

"Oh, shut up," said Paul.

At this the boy took out a handkerchief and began to cry quietly.

"Oh, sir," came a chorus of reproach, "you've hurt his feelings. He's very sensitive, it's his Welsh blood, you know, it makes people very emotional. Say 'Good morning' to him, sir, or he won't be happy all day. After all, it is a good morning, isn't it, sir?"

"Silence !" shouted Paul above the uproar, and for a few moments things were quieter.

"Please, sir," said a small voice -- Paul turned and saw a grave-looking youth holding up his hand -- "please, sir, perhaps he's been smoking cigars and doesn't feel well."

"Silence !" said Paul again.

The ten boys stopped talking and sat perfectly still staring at him. He felt himself getting hot and red under their scrutiny.

"I suppose the first thing I ought to do is to get your names clear. What is your name?" he asked, turning to the first boy.

"Tangent, sir."

"And yours ?"

"Tangent, sir," said the next boy. Paul's heart sank.

"But you can't both be called Tangent."

"No, sir, I'm Tangent. He's just trying to be funny."

"I like that. Me trying to be funny! Please, sir, I'm Tangent, sir, really I am."

"If it comes to that," said Clutterbuck from the back of the room, "there is only one Tangent here, and that is me. Anyone else can jolly well go to blazes!"

Paul felt desperate.

"Well, is there anyone who isn't Tangent?"

Four or five voices instantly arose.

"I'm not, sir. I'm not Tangent. I wouldn't be called Tangent, not on the end of a barge pole."

In a few seconds the room had become divided into two parties, those who were Tangent and those who were not. Blows were already being exchanged, when the door opened and Grimes came in. There was a slight hush.

"I thought you might want this," he said, handing Paul a walking-stick. "And if you take my advice, you'll set them something to do."

He went out; and Paul, firmly grasping the walking-

stick, faced his form.

"Listen," he said, "I don't care a damn what any of you are called, but if there's another word from anyone I shall keep you all in this afternoon."

"You can't keep me in," said Clutterbuck, "I'm going for a walk with Captain Grimes."

"Then I shall very nearly kill you with this stick. Meanwhile you will all write an essay on 'Self-indulgence ' There will be a prize of half a crown for the longest essay, irrespective of any possible merit."

From then onwards all was silence until break. Paul, still holding the stick, gazed despondently out of the window. Now and then there rose from below the shrill voices of the servants scolding each other in Welsh. By the time the bell rang Clutterbuck had covered sixteen pages, and was awarded the half-crown.

"Did you find those boys difficult to manage?" asked Mr. Prendergast, filling his pipe.

"Not at all," said Paul.

"Ah, you're lucky I find all boys utterly intractable. I don't know why it is. Of course my wig has a lot to do with it. Have you noticed that I wear a wig?"

"No, no, of course not."

"Well, the boys did as soon as they saw it. It was a great mistake my ever getting one. I thought when I left Worthing that I looked too old to get a job easily. I was only forty-one. It was very expensive, even though I chose the cheapest quality. Perhaps that's why it looks so like a wig. I don't know. I knew from the first that it was a mistake, but once they had seen it, it was too late to go back. They make all sorts of jokes about it."

"I expect they'd laugh at something else if it wasn't that."

"Yes, no doubt they would. I daresay it's a good thing to localize their ridicule as far as possible. Oh dear, oh

dear! If it wasn't for my pipes, I don't know how I should manage to keep on. What made you come here?"

"I was sent down from Scone for indecent behaviour."

"Oh yes, like Grimes?"

"No," said Paul firmly, "not like Grimes."

"Oh, well, it's all much the same really. And there's the bell. Oh dear, oh dear, I believe that loathsome little man's taken my gown."

Two days later Beste-Chetwynde pulled out the vox humana and played Pop goes the Weasel.

"D'you know, sir, you've made rather a hit with the fifth form?"

He and Paul were seated in the organ-loft of the village church. It was their second music-lesson.

"For goodness' sake, leave the organ alone. How d'you mean 'hit'?"

"Well, Clutterbuck was in the matron's room this morning. He'd just got a tin of pineapple chunks. Tangent said, 'Are you going to take that into Hall?' and he said, 'No, I'm going to eat them in Mr. Pennyfeather's hour.' 'Oh no, you're not,' said Tangent. 'Sweets and biscuits are one thing, but pineapple chunks are going too far. It's little stokers like you,' he said, 'who turn decent masters savage.'"

"Do you think that's so very complimentary?"

"I think it's one of the most complimentary things I ever heard said about a master," said Beste-Chetwynde, "would you like me to try that hymn again?"

"No," said Paul decisively.

"Well, then, I'll tell you another thing," said Beste-Chetwynde. "You know that man Philbrick? Well, I think there's something odd about him."

"I've no doubt of it."

"It's not just that he's such a bad butler. The servants are always ghastly here. But I don't believe he's a butler at all."

"I don't quite see what else he can be."

"Well, have you ever known a butler with a diamond tie-pin ?"

"No, I don't think I have."

"Well, Philbrick's got one, and a diamond ring too. He showed them to Brolly. Colossal great diamonds! Brolly says Philbrick said he used to have bushels of diamonds and emeralds before the war, and that he used to eat off gold plate. We believe that he's a Russian prince in exile."

"Generally speaking, Russians are not shy about using their titles, are they ? Besides, he looks very English."

"Yes, we thought of that, but Brolly said lots of Russians came to school in England before the war. And now I am going to play the organ," said Beste-Chetwynde. "After all, my mother does pay five guineas a term extra for me to learn."

CHAPTER VI

Conduct

SITTING over the Common Room fire that afternoon waiting for the bell for tea, Paul found himself reflecting that on the whole the last week had not been quite as awful as he had expected. As Beste-Chetwynde had told him, he was a distinct success with his form, after the first day an understanding had been established between them. It was tacitly agreed that when Paul wished to read or to write letters, he was allowed to do so undisturbed while he left them to employ the time as they thought best, when Paul took it upon him to talk to them about their lessons they remained silent, and when he set them work to do

some of it was done. It had rained steadily, so that there had been no games. No punishments, no reprisals, no exertion, and in the evenings the confessions of Grimes, any one of which would have glowed with outstanding shamelessness from the appendix to a treatise in psycho-analysis.

Mr. Prendergast came in with the post.

"A letter for you, two for Grimes, nothing for me," he said" No one ever writes to me. There was a time when I used to get five or six letters a day, not counting circulars. My mother used to file them for me to answer -- one heap of charity appeals, another for personal letters, another for marriages and funerals, another for baptisms and churchings and another for anonymous abuse. I wonder why it is the clergy always get so many letters of that sort, sometimes from quite educated people. I remember my father had great trouble in that way once, and he was forced to call in the police because they became so threatening. And, do you know, it was the curate's wife who had sent them -- such a quiet little woman. There's your letter Grimes, look like bills. I can't think why shops give that man credit at all. I always pay cash, or at least I should if I ever bought anything. But d'you know that, except for my tobacco and the Daily News and occasionally a little port when it's very cold, I don't think I've bought anything for two years. The last thing I bought was that walking-stick. I got it at Shankkn, and Grimes uses it for beating the boys with. I hadn't really meant to buy one, but I was there for the day -- two years this August -- and I went into the tobacconist's to buy some tobacco. He hadn't the sort I wanted, and I felt I couldn't go out without getting something, so I bought that. It cost one-and-six," he added wistfully, "so I had no tea" Paul took his letter. It had been forwarded from Onslow Square. On the flap were embossed the arms of Scone College. It was from one of his four friends.

Scone College FCR,

Oxford

My dear Pennyfeather, it ran,

I need hardly tell you how distressed I was when I heard

of your disastrous misfortune. It seems to me that a real injustice has been done to you. I have not heard the full facts of the case, but I was confirmed in my opinion by a very curious incident last evening. I was just going to bed when Digby-Vaine-Trumington came into my rooms without knocking. He was smoking a cigar. I had never spoken to him before, as you know, and was very much surprised at his visit. He said "I'm told you are a friend of Penny-feather's." I said I was, and he said, "Well, I gather I've rather got him into a mess", I said, "Yes," and he said "Well, will you apologize to him for me when you write?" I said I would. Then he said "Look here. I'm told he's rather poor. I thought of sending him some money -- £20 for sort of damages, you know. It's all I can spare at the moment. Wouldn't it be a useful thing to do. I fairly let him have it, I can tell you, and told him just what I thought of him for making such an insulting suggestion. I asked him how he dared treat a gentleman like that just because he wasn't in his awful set. He seemed rather taken aback and said "Well all my friends spend all their time trying to get money out of me," and went off.

I bicycled over to St Magnus's at Little Bechley and took some rubbings of the brasses there. I wished you had been with me.

Yours,

Arthur Potts

P.S -- I understand you are thinking of taking up educational work. It seems to me that the great problem of education is to train the moral perceptions, not merely to discipline the appetites. I cannot help thinking that it is in greater fastidiousness rather than in greater self-control that the future progress of the race lies. I shall be interested to hear what your experience has been over the matter. The chaplain does not agree with me in this. He says great sensibility usually leads to enervation of will. Let me know what you think.

"What do you think about that?" asked Paul, handing Mr. Prendergast the letter.

"Well," he said after studying it carefully, "I think your friend is wrong about sensibility. It doesn't do to rely on

one's own feelings, does it, not in anything."

"No, I mean about the money."

"Good gracious, Pennyfeather! I hope you are in no doubt about that. Accept it at once, of course."

"It's a temptation."

"My dear boy, it would be a sin to refuse Twenty pounds ! Why, it takes me half a term to earn that."

The bell rang for tea. In the dining-hall Paul gave the letter to Grimes.

"Shall I take that twenty pounds" he asked.

"Take it' My God! I should think you would."

"Well, I'm not sure," said Paul.

He thought about it all through afternoon school, all the time he was dressing for dinner, and all through dinner. It was a severe struggle, but his early training was victorious.

"If I take that money," he said to himself, "I shall never know whether I have acted rightly or not It would always be on my mind. If I refuse, I shall be sure of having done right. I shall look back upon my self-denial with exquisite self-approval. By refusing, I can convince myself that, in spite of the unbelievable things that have been happening to me during the last ten days, I am still the same Paul Pennyfeather I have respected so long. It is a test-case of the durability of my ideals.

He tried to explain something of what he felt to Grimes as they sat in Mrs. Roberts' bar parlour that evening.

"I'm afraid you'll find my attitude rather difficult to understand," he said. "I suppose it's largely a matter of upbringing. There is every reason why I should take this money Digby-Vaine-Trumpington is exceedingly rich, and if he keeps it, it will undoubtedly be spent on betting or on some deplorable debauch. Owing to his party I have suffered irreparable harm. My whole future is shattered, and I have directly lost one hundred and

twenty pounds a year in scholarships and two hundred and fifty pounds a year allowance from my guardian. By any ordinary process of thought, the money is justly mine. But," said Paul Pennyfeather, "there is my honour. For generations the British bourgeoisie have spoken of themselves as gentlemen, and by that they have meant, among other things, a self-respecting scorn of irregular perquisites. It is the quality that distinguishes the gentleman from both the artist and the aristocrat. Now I am a gentleman, I can't help it, it's born in me. I just can't take that money."

"Well, I'm a gentleman too, old boy," said Grimes, "and I was afraid you might feel like that, so I did my best for you and saved you from yourself."

"What d'you mean by that?"

"Dear old boy, don't be angry, but immediately after tea I sent off a wire to your friend Potts. 'Tell Trumpington send money quick,' and signed it 'Pennyfeather ' I don't mind lending you the bob till it comes, either."

"Grimes, you wretch !" said Paul, but, in spite of himself, he felt a great wave of satisfaction surge up within him. "We must have another drink on that."

"Good for you," said Grimes, "and it's on me this round."

"To the durability of ideals." said Paul as he got his pint.

"My word, what a mouthful," said Grimes, "I can't say that Cheenoh,"

Two days later came another letter from Arthur Potts.

Dear Pennyfeather,

I enclose Trumpington's cheque for £20. I am glad that my dealings with him are at an end. I cannot pretend to understand your attitude in this matter, but no doubt you are the best judge.

Stiggins is reading a paper to the O S C U on "Sex Repression and Religious Experience". Everyone expects

rather a row, because you know how keen Walton is on the mystical element, which I think Stiggs is inclined to discount.

Yours,

Arthur Potts

P.S.

There is a most interesting article in the "Educational Review" on the new methods that are being tried at the Innesborough High School to induce co-ordination of the senses. They put small objects into the children's mouths and make them draw the shapes in red chalk. Have you tried this with your boys ? I must say I envy you your opportunities. Are your colleagues enlightened?

"This same Potts," said Grimes as he read the letter, "would appear to be something of a stinker. Still, we've got the doings. How about a binge?"

"Yes," said Paul, "I think we ought to do something about one. I should like to ask Prendy too."

"Why, of course It's just what Prendy needs. He's been looking awfully down in the mouth lately. Why shouldn't we all go over to the Metropole at Cwmptryddyg for dinner one night? We shall have to wait until the old boy goes away, otherwise he'll notice that there's no one on duty."

Later in the day Paul suggested the plan to Mr. Prendergast.

"Really, Pennyfeather," he said, "I think that's uncommonly kind of you. I hardly know what to say. Of course, I should love it. I can't remember when I dined at an hotel last. Certainly not since the war. It will be a treat. My dear boy, I'm quite overcome."

And, much to Paul's embarrassment, a tear welled up in each of Mr. Prendergast's eyes, and coursed down his cheeks.

CHAPTER VII

Philbrick

THAT morning just before luncheon the weather began to show signs of clearing, and by half-past one the sun was shining. The Doctor made one of his rare visits to the school dining-hall. At his entry everybody stopped eating and laid down his knife and fork.

"Boys," said the Doctor, regarding them benignly, "I have an announcement to make. Clutterbuck, will you kindly stop eating while I am addressing the school. The boys' manners need correcting, Mr. Prendergast. I look to the prefects to see to this. Boys, the chief sporting event of the year will take place in the playing-fields to-morrow. I refer to the Annual School Sports, unfortunately postponed last year owing to the General Strike. Mr. Pennyfeather, who, as you know, is himself a distinguished athlete, will be in charge of all arrangements. The preliminary heats will be run off to-day. All boys must compete in all events. The Countess of Circumference has kindly consented to present the prizes. Mr. Prendergast will act as referee, and Captain Gnmes as timekeeper. I shall myself be present to-morrow to watch the final competitions. That is all, thank you. Mr. Pennyfeather, perhaps you will favour me with an interview when you have finished your luncheon?"

"Good God!" murmured Paul.

"I won the long jump at the last sports," said Briggs, "but everyone said that it was because I had spiked shoes. Do you wear spiked shoes, sir?"

"Invariably," said Paul.

"Everyone said it was taking an unfair advantage. You see, we never know beforehand when there's going to be sports, so we don't have time to get ready."

"My mamma's coming down to see me to-morrow," said Beste-Chetwynde, "just my luck! Now I shall have to stay here all the afternoon."

After luncheon Paul went to the morning-room, where he found the Doctor pacing up and down in evident high excitement.

"Ah, come in, Pennyfeather! I am just making the arrangements for to-morrow's fete. Florence, will you get on to the Clutterbucks on the telephone and ask them to come over, and the Hope-Brownes. I think the Waringtons are too far away, but you might ask them, and of course the Vicar and old Major Sidebotham. The more guests the better, Florence!"

"And, Diana, you must arrange the tea. Sandwiches, foie gras sandwiches -- last time, you remember, the liver sausage you bought made Lady Bunyan ill -- and cakes, plenty of cakes, with coloured sugar ! You had better take the car into Llandudno and get them there.

"Philbrick, there must be champagne-cup, and will you help the men putting up the marquee? And flags, Diana' There should be flags left over from last time."

"I made them into dusters," said Dingy.

"Well, we must buy more. No expense must be spared. Pennyfeather, I want you to get the results of the first heats out by four o'clock. Then you can telephone them to the printers, and we shall have the programmes by to-morrow. Tell them that fifty will be enough, they must be decorated with the school colours and crest in gold. And there must be flowers, Diana, banks of flowers," said the Doctor with an expansive gesture. "The prizes shall stand among banks of flowers. Do you think there ought to be a bouquet for Lady Circumference?"

"No," said Dingy.

"Nonsense," said the Doctor. "Of course there must be a bouquet. It is rarely that the scholarly calm of Llanabba gives place to festival, but when it does taste and dignity shall go unhampered. It shall be an enormous bouquet, redolent of hospitality. You are to procure the most expensive bouquet that Wales can offer, do you understand? Flowers, youth, wisdom, the glitter of jewels, music," said the Doctor, his imagination soaring to dizzy heights under the stimulus of the words, "Music!

There must be a band."

"I never heard of such a thing," said Dingy. "A band indeed! You'll be having fireworks next"

"And fireworks," said the Doctor, "and do you think it would be a good thing to buy Mr. Prendergast a new tie? I noticed how shabby he looked this morning."

"No," said Dingy with finality, "that is going too far. Flowers and fireworks are one thing, but I insist on drawing a fine somewhere. It would be sinful to buy Mr. Prendergast a tie."

"Perhaps you are right," said the Doctor. "But there shall be music. I understand that the Llanabba Silver Band was third at the North Wales Eisteddfod last month. Will you get on to them, Florence? I think Mr. Davies at the station is the bandmaster. Can the Clutterbucks come?"

"Yes," said Flossie, "six of them."

"Admirable! And then there is the Press. We must ring up the Flint and Denbigh Herald and get them to send a photographer. That means whisky. Will you see to that, Philbrick? I remember at one of our sports I omitted to offer whisky to the Press, and the result was a most unfortunate photograph. Boys do get into such indelicate positions during the obstacle race, don't they?"

"Then there are the prizes. I think you had better take Grimes into Llandrindno with you to help with the prizes. I don't think there is any need for undue extravagance with the prizes. It gives boys a wrong idea of sport. I wonder whether Lady Circumference would think it odd if we asked her to present parsley crowns. Perhaps she would. Utility, economy and apparent durability are the qualities to be sought for, I think.

"And, Pennyfeather, I hope you will see that they are distributed fairly evenly about the school. It doesn't do to let any boy win more than two events. I leave you to arrange that. I think it would be only right if little Lord Tangent won something, and Beste-Chetwynde-- yes, his mother is coming down, too.

"I am afraid all this has been thrown upon your shoulders rather suddenly. I only learned this morning that Lady Circumference proposed to visit us, and as Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde was coming too, it seemed too good an opportunity to be missed. It is not often that the visits of two such important parents coincide. She is the Honourable Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde, you know -- sister-in-law of Lord Pastmaster -- a very wealthy woman, South American. They always say that she poisoned her husband, but of course little Beste-Chetwynde doesn't know that. It never came into court, but there was a great deal of talk about it at the time. Perhaps you remember the case?"

"No," said Paul.

"Powdered glass," said Flossie shrilly, "in his coffee."

"Turkish coffee," said Dingy.

"To work!" said the Doctor; "We have a lot to see to."

It was raining again by the time that Paul and Mr. Prendergast reached the playing-fields. The boys were waiting for them in bleak little groups, shivering at the unaccustomed austerity of bare knees and open necks. Clutterbuck had fallen down in the mud and was crying quietly behind a tree.

"How shall we divide them?" said Paul.

"I don't know," said Mr. Prendergast. "Frankly, I deplore the whole business."

Philbrick appeared in an overcoat and a bowler hat.

"Miss Fagan says she's very sorry, but she's burnt the hurdles and the jumping posts for firewood. She thinks she can hire some in Llandudno for to-morrow. The Doctor says you must do the best you can till then. I've got to help the gardeners put up the blasted tent."

"I think that, if anything, sports are rather worse than concerts," said Mr. Prendergast. "They at least happen

indoors. Oh dear, oh dear ! How wet I am getting. I should have got my boots mended if I'd known this was going to happen."

"Please, sir," said Beste-Chetwynde, "we're all getting rather cold. Can we start?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Paul. "What do you want to do?"

"Well, we ought to divide up into heats and then run a race."

"All right! Get into four groups."

This took some time. They tried to induce Mr. Prendergast to run too.

"The first race will be a mile. Prendy, will you look after them? I want to see if Philbrick and I can fix up anything for the jumping."

"But what am I to do?" said Mr. Prendergast.

"Just make each group run to the Castle and back and take the names of the first two in each heat. It's quite simple."

"I'll try," he said sadly.

Paul and Philbrick went into the pavilion together.

"Me, a butler," said Philbrick, "made to put up tents like a blinking Arab!"

"Well, it's a change," said Paul.

"It's a change for me to be a butler," said Philbrick. "I wasn't made to be anyone's servant."

"No, I suppose not."

"I expect you wonder how it is that I come to be here ?" said Philbrick.

"No," said Paul firmly, "nothing of the kind. I don't

in the least want to know anything about you, d'you hear ?"

"I'll tell you," said Philbrick, "it was like this."

"I don't want to hear your loathsome confessions, can't you understand?"

"It isn't a loathsome confession," said Philbrick. "It's a story of love. I think it is without exception the most beautiful story I know."

"I daresay you have heard of Sir Solomon Philbrick ?"

"No," said Paul.

"What, never heard of old Solly Philbrick ?"

"No, why?"

"Because that's me. And I can tell you this. It's a pretty well-known name across the river. You've only to say Solly Philbrick, of the 'Lamb and Flag,' anywhere south of Waterloo Bridge to see what fame is. Try it."

"I will one day."

"Mind you, when I say Sir Solomon Philbrick, that's only a bit of fun, see ? That's what the boys call me. Plain Mr. Solomon Philbrick I am, really, just like you or him," with a jerk of the thumb towards the playing-fields, from which Mr. Prendergast's voice could be heard crying weakly, "Oh, do get into line, you beastly boys," "but Sir Solomon's what they call me. Out of respect, see?"

"When I say, 'Are you ready? Go!' I want you to go,"

Mr. Prendergast could be heard saying "Are you ready? Go ! Oh, why don't you go ?" And his voice became drowned in shrill cries of protest.

"Mind you," went on Philbrick, "I haven't always been in the position that I am now. I was brought up rough, damned rough. Ever heard speak of 'Chick' Philbrick?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

"No, I suppose he was before your time. Useful little boxer, though. Not first-class, on account of his drinking so much and being short in the arm. Still, he used to earn five pound a night at the Lambeth Stadium. Always popular with the boys, he was, even when he was so full, he couldn't hardly fight. He was my dad, a good-hearted sort of fellow but rough, as I was telling you, he used to knock my poor mother about something awful. Got jugged for it twice, but my, he took it out of her when he got out. There aren't many left like him nowadays, what with education and whisky the price it is."

" 'Chick' was all for getting me on in the sporting world, and before I left school I was earning a few shillings a week holding the sponge at the Stadium on Saturday nights. It was there I met Toby Cruttwell. Perhaps you ain't never heard of him, neither?"

"No, I am terribly afraid I haven't. I'm not very well up in sporting characters."

"Sporting! What, Toby Cruttwell a sporting character?! You make me laugh. Toby Cruttwell," said Philbrick with renewed emphasis, "what brought off the Buller diamond robbery of 1919, and the Amalgamated Steel Trust robbery of 1910, and the Isle of Wight burglaries in 1914? He wasn't no sporting character, Toby wasn't Sporting character ! D'you know what he done to Alf Lanigan, what tried to put it over on one of his girls? I'll tell you Toby had a doctor in tow at the time, name of Peterfield, lives in Harley Street, with a swell lot of patients. Well, Toby knew a thing about him. He'd done in one of Toby's girls what went to him because she was going to have a kid. Well, Toby knew that, so he had to do what Toby told him, see?"

'Toby didn't kill Alf, that wasn't his way. Toby never killed no one except a lot of blinking Turks the time they gave him the V C. But he got hold of him and took him to Dr Peterfield, and" Philbrick's voice sank to a whisper.

"Second heat, get ready. Now, if you don't go when I say 'Go,' I shall disqualify you all, d'you hear!? Are you

ready? Go."

"He hadn't no use for girls after that. Ha, ha, ha! Sporting character's good. Well, me and Toby worked together for five years. I was with him in the Steel Trust and the Buller diamonds, and we cleared a nice little profit. Toby took 75 per cent, him being the older man, but even with that I did pretty well. Just before the war we split. He stuck to safe-cracking, and I settled down comfortable at the 'Lamb and Flag,' Camberwell Green A very fine house that was before the war, and it's best in the locality now, though I says it. Things aren't quite so easy as they was, but I can't complain I've got the Picture House next to it, too. Just mention my name there any day you like to have a free seat."

"That's very land of you."

"You're welcome. Well, then there was the war. Toby got the V C in the Dardanelles and turned respectable. He's in Parliament now -- Major Cruttwell, MP, Conservative member for some potty town on the South Coast. My old woman ran the pub for me. Didn't tell you I was married, did I? Pretty enough bit of goods when we was spliced, but she ran to fat. Women do in the public-house business. After the war things were a bit slow, and then my old woman kicked the bucket. I didn't think I'd mind much, her having got so fat and all, nor I didn't not at first, but after a time, when the excitement of the funeral had died down and things were going on just the same as usual, I began to get restless. You know how things get, and I took to reading the papers. Before that my old woman used to read out the bits she'd like, and sometimes I'd listen and sometimes I wouldn't, but anyhow they weren't the things that interested me. She never took no interest in crime, not unless it was a murder. But I took to reading the police news, and I took to dropping in at the pictures whenever they sent me a crook film. I didn't sleep so well, neither, and I used to lie awake thinking of old times. Of course I could have married again in my position. I could have married pretty well who I liked, but it wasn't that I wanted.

"Then one Saturday night I came into the bar I generally drop in on. Saturday evenings and smoke a cigar and stand a round of drinks. It sets the night tone. I

wear a buttonhole in the summer, too, and a diamond ring. Well, I was in the saloon when who did I see in the corner but, Jimmy Drage -- cove I used to know when I was working with Toby Cruttwell. I never see a man look more discouraged.

" 'Hullo, Jimmy!' I says. 'We don't see each other as often as we used. How are things with you ? ' I says it cordial, but careful like, because I didn't know what Jimmy was up to.

" 'Pretty bad,' said Jimmy 'Just fooled a job."

" 'What sort of job ? ' I says 'Nobbling,' he says, meaning kidnapping.

" 'It was like this,' he says 'You know a toff called Lord Uttendge ? ' "

" 'The bloke what had them electric burglar alarms,' I says, 'Uttendge. House, Belgrave Square ? ' "

" 'That's the blinking bastard. Well, he's got a son - nasty little kid about twelve, just going off to college for the first time I'd had my eye on him,' Jimmy said, 'for a long time, him being the only son and his father so rich, so when I'd finished the last job I was on I had a go at him. Everything went as easy drinking,' Jimmy said There was a garage just round the corner behind Belgrave Square where he used to go every morning to watch them messing about with the cars. Crazy about cars the kid was. Jimmy comes in one day with his motor bike and side-car and asks for some petrol. He comes up and looks at it in the way he had.

" 'That bike's no good,' he says 'No good ? ' says Jimmy 'I wouldn't sell it, not for a hundred quid, I wouldn't. This bike,' he says, 'won the Grand Prix at Boulogne' 'Nonsense !' the kid says, 'it wouldn't do thirty, not downhill ' 'Well, just you see,' Jimmy says 'Come for a run ? I bet you I'll do eighty on the road. ' In he got, and away they went till they got to a place Jimmy knew. Then Jimmy shuts him up safe and writes to the father. The kid was happy as blazes taking down the engine of Jimmy's bike. It's never been the same since, Jimmy told me, but then it wasn't much to talk

of before. Everything had gone through splendid till Jimmy got his answer from Lord Uttendge. Would you beheve it, that unnatural father wouldn't stump up, him that owns ships and coal mines enough to buy the blinking Bank of England. Said he was much obliged to Jimmy for the trouble he had taken, that the dearest wish of his life had been gratified and the one barrier to his complete happiness removed, but that, as the matter had been taken up without his instructions, he did not feel called upon to make any payment in respect of it, and remained his sincerely, Uttendge.' "

"That was a nasty one for Jimmy. He wrote once or twice after that, but got no answer, so by the time the kid had spread bits of the bike all over the room Jimmy let him go.

" 'Did you try pulling out 'is teeth and sending them to his pa?' I asks

" 'No, says Jimmy, 'I didn't do that. '

" 'Did you make the kid write pathetic, asking to be let out?'

" 'No,' says Jimmy, 'I didn't do that. '

" 'Did you cut off one of his fingers and put it in the letter-box?'

" 'No,' he says.

" 'Well, man alive,' I says, 'you don't deserve to succeed, you just don't know your job. '

" 'Oh, cut that out,' he says, 'it's easy to talk. You've been out of the business ten years. You don't know what things are like nowadays. '

"Well, that rather set me thinking. As I say, I'd been getting restless doing nothing but just pottering round the pub all day 'Look here,' I says, 'I bet you I can bring off a job like that any day with any kid you like to mention ' 'Done ! ' says Jimmy. So he opens a newspaper. The first toff we find what's got a' only son,' he says 'Right ! ' says I. Well, about the first thing we found was a

picture of Lady Circumference with her only son. Lord Tangent, at Warwick Races 'There's your man,' says Jimmy. And that's what brought me here."

"But, good gracious," said Paul, "why have you told me this monstrous story? I shall certainly inform the police I never heard of such a thing."

"That's all right," said Philbrick "The job's off. Jimmy's won his bet All this was before I met Dina, see?"

"Dina?"

"Miss Diana. Dina I calls her, after a song I heard The moment I saw that girl I knew the game was up. My heart just stood still. There's a song about that, too. That girl," said Philbrick, "could bring a man up from the depths of hell itself."

"You feel as strongly as that about her?"

"I'd go through fire and water for that girl. She's not happy here. I don't think her dad treats her proper. Sometimes," said Philbrick, "I think she's only marrying me to get away from here."

"Good heavens ' Are you going to get married ?"

"We fixed it up last Thursday. We've been going together for some time. It's bad for a girl being shut away like that, never seeing a man. She was in a state she'd have gone with anybody until I come along, just housekeeping day in, day out. The only pleasure she ever got was cutting down the bills and dismissing the servants. Most of them leave before their month is up, anyway, they're that hungry. She's got a head on her shoulders she has. Real business woman, just what I need at the 'Lamb '. "

"Then she heard me on the 'phone one day giving instructions to our manager at the Picture Theatre. That made her think a bit. A prince in disguise, as you might say. It was she who actually suggested our getting married. I shouldn't have had the face to, not while I was butler. What I'd meant to do was to hire a car one day

and come down with my diamond ring and buttonhole and pop the question. But there wasn't any need for that. Love's a wonderful thing."

Philbrick stopped speaking and was evidently deeply moved by his recital. The door of the pavilion opened, and Mr. Prendergast came in.

"Well," asked Paul, "how are the sports going?"

"Not very well," said Mr. Prendergast, "in fact, they've gone."

"All over?"

"Yes. You see, none of the boys came back from the first race. They just disappeared behind the trees at the top of the drive. I expect they've gone to change. I don't blame them, I'm sure. It's terribly cold. Still, it was discouraging launching heat after heat and none coming back. Like sending troops into battle, you know?"

"The best thing for us to do is to go back and change too."

"Yes, I suppose so. Oh, what a day!"

Grimes was in the Common Room.

"Just back from the gay metropolis of Llandudno," he said. "Shopping with Dingy is not a seemly occupation for a public-school man. How did the heats go?"

"There weren't any," said Paul.

"Quite right," said Grimes, "you leave this to me. I've been in the trade some time. These things are best done over the fire. We can make out the results in peace. We'd better hurry. The old boy wants them sent to be printed this evening."

And taking a sheet of paper and a small stub of pencil, Grimes made out the programme.

"How about that?" he said.

"Clutterbuck seems to have done pretty well," said Paul.

"Yes, he's a splendid little athlete," said Grimes. "Now just you telephone that through to the printers, and they'll get it done to-night. I wonder if we ought to have a hurdle race?"

"No," said Mr. Prendergast.

CHAPTER VIII

The Sports

HAPPILY enough, it did not rain next day, and after morning school everybody dressed up to the nines. Dr. Fagan appeared in a pale grey morning coat and spongebag trousers, looking more than ever jeune premier; there was a spring in his step and a pronounced sprightliness of bearing that Paul had not observed before. Flossie wore a violet frock of knitted wool made for her during the preceding autumn by her sister. It was the colour of indelible ink on blotting paper, and was ornamented at the waist with flowers of emerald green and pink. Her hat, also home-made, was the outcome of many winter evenings of ungrudged labour. All the trimmings of all her previous hats had gone to its adornment. Dingy wore a little steel brooch made in the shape of a bull-dog. Grimes wore a stiff evening collar of celluloid.

"Had to do something to celebrate the occasion," he said, "so I put on a 'choker ' Phew, though, it's tight! Have you seen my fiancée's latest creation? Ascot ain't in it. Let's get down to Mrs. Roberts for a quick one before the happy throng rolls up."

"I wish I could, but I've got to go round the ground with the Doctor."

"Righto, old boy' See you later. Here comes Prendy in his coat of many colours."

Mr. Prendergast wore a blazer of faded stripes, which smelt strongly of camphor.

"I think Dr. Fagan encourages a certain amount of display on these occasions," he said. "I used to keep wicket for my college, you know, but I was too short-sighted to be much good. Still, I am entitled to the blazer," he said with a note of defiance in his voice, "and it is more appropriate to a sporting occasion than a stiff collar."

"Good old Prendy," said Grimes. "Nothing like a change of clothes to bring out latent pep. I felt like that my first week in khaki. Well, so long. Me for Mrs. Roberts. Why don't you come too, Prendy?"

"D'you know," said Mr. Prendergast, "I think I will."

Paul watched them disappear down the drive in amazement. Then he went off to find the Doctor.

"Frankly," said the Doctor, "I am at a loss to understand my own emotions. I can think of no entertainment that fills me with greater detestation than a display of competitive athletics, none -- except possibly folk-dancing. If there are two women in the world whose company I abominate -- and there are very many more than two -- they are Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde and Lady Circumference. I have, moreover, had an extremely difficult encounter with my butler, who -- will you believe it? -- waited at luncheon in a mustard-coloured suit of plus-fours and a diamond tie-pin, and when I reprimanded him, attempted to tell me some ridiculous story about his being the proprietor of a circus or swimming-bath or some such concern. And yet," said the Doctor, "I am filled with a wholly delightful exhilaration I can't understand it. It is not as though this was the first occasion of the land. During the fourteen years that I have been at Llanabba there have been six sports days and two concerts, all of them, in one way or another, utterly disastrous. Once Lady Bunyan was taken ill, another time it was the matter of the press photographers and the obstacle race, another time some quite unimportant parents brought a dog with them which bit two of the boys very severely and one of the masters, who swore terribly in front of every one. I could hardly blame him, but of course he had to go. Then there was the concert when the boys refused to sing 'God Save the King' because of the pudding they had had

for luncheon. One way and another, I have been consistently unfortunate in my efforts at festivity. And yet I look forward to each new fiasco with the utmost relish. Perhaps, Pennyfeather, you will bring luck to Llanabba, in fact, I feel confident you have already done so. Look at the sun."

Picking their way carefully among the dry patches in the waterlogged drive, they reached the playing-fields. Here the haphazard organization of the last twenty-four hours seemed to have been fairly successful. A large marquee was already in position, and Philbrick -- still in plus-fours -- and three gardeners were at work putting up a smaller tent.

"That's for the Llanabba Silver Band," said the Doctor. "Philbrick, I required you to take off those loathsome garments."

"They were new when I bought them," said Philbrick, "and they cost eight pounds fifteen. Anyhow, I can't do two things at once, can I? If I go back to change, who's going to manage all this, I'd like to know?"

"All right! Finish what you are doing first. Let us just review the arrangements. The marquee is for the visitors' tea. That is Diana's province. I expect we shall find her at work."

Sure enough, there was Dingy helping two servants to arrange plates of highly-coloured cakes down a trestle table. Two other servants in the background were cutting sandwiches. Dingy, too, was obviously enjoying herself.

"Jane, Emily, remember that that butter has to do for three loaves. Spread it thoroughly, but don't waste it, and cut the crusts as thin as possible. Father, will you see to it that the boys who come in with their parents come in alone? You remember last time how Briggs brought in four boys with him, and they ate all the jam sandwiches before Colonel Loder had had any. Mr. Pennyfeather, the champagne-cup is not for the masters. In fact, I expect you will find yourselves too much occupied helping the visitors to have any tea until they have left the tent. You had better tell Captain Grimes that, too. I am sure Mr. Prendergast would not think of pushing

himself forward."

Outside the marquee were assembled several seats and tubs of palms and flowering shrubs. "All this must be set in order," said the Doctor, "our guests may arrive in less than an hour" He passed on. "The cars shall turn aside from the drive here and come right into the ground. It will give a pleasant background to the photographs, and, Pennyfeather, if you would with tact direct the photographer so that more prominence was given to Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde's Hispano Suiza than to Lady Circumference's little motor car, I think it would be all to the good. All these things count, you know."

"Nothing seems to have been done about marking out the ground," said Paul.

"No," said the Doctor, turning his attention to the field for the first time, "Nothing. Well, you must do the best you can. They can't do everything."

"I wonder if any hurdles have come?"

"They were ordered," said the Doctor. "I am certain of it. Philbrick, have any hurdles come?"

"Yes," said Philbrick with a low chuckle.

"Why, pray, do you laugh at the mention of hurdles?"

"Just you look at them," said Philbrick. "They're behind the tea-house there."

Paul and the Doctor went to look and found a pile of spiked iron railings in sections heaped up at the back of the marquee. They were each about five feet high and were painted green with gilt spikes.

"It seems to me that they have sent the wrong sort," said the Doctor.

"Yes."

"Well, we must do the best we can. What other things ought there to be?"

"Weight, hammer, javelin, long-jump pit, high-jump posts, low hurdles, eggs, spoons and greasy pole," said Philbrick.

"Previously competed for," said the Doctor. Imperturbably. "What else?"

"Somewhere to run," suggested Paul.

"Why, God bless my soul, they've got the whole park! How did you manage yesterday for the heats?"

"We judged the distance by eye."

"Then that is what we shall have to do to-day. Really, my dear Pennyfeather, it is quite unlike you to fabricate difficulties in this way. I am afraid you are getting unnerved. Let them go on racing until it is time for tea, and remember," he added sagely, "the longer the race the more time it takes. I leave the details to you. I am concerned with style. I wish, for instance, we had a starting pistol."

"Would this be any use?" said Philbrick, producing an enormous service revolver. "Only take care, it's loaded"

"The very thing," said the Doctor. "Only fire into the ground, mind. We must do everything we can to avoid an accident. Do you always carry that about with you?"

"Only when I'm wearing my diamonds," said Philbrick.

"Well, I hope that is not often Good gracious! Who are these extraordinary-looking people?"

Ten men of revolting appearance were approaching from the drive. They were low of brow, crafty of eye and crooked of limb. They advanced huddled together with the loping tread of wolves, peering about them furtively as they came, as though in constant terror of ambush, they slavered at their mouths, which hung loosely over their receding chins, while each clutched under his ape-like arm a burden of curious and unaccountable shape. On seeing the Doctor they halted and edged back, those behind squinting and moulting over their companions' shoulders.

"Crikey !" said Philbrick. "Loonies! This is where I shoot."

"I refuse to believe the evidence of my eyes," said the Doctor. "These creatures simply do not exist."

After brief preliminary shuffling and nudging, an elderly man emerged from the back of the group. He had a rough black beard and wore on his uneven shoulders a druidical wreath of brass mistletoe-berries.

"Why, it's my friend, the stationmaster," said Philbrick.

"We are the Silver Band the Lord bless and keep you," said the stationmaster in one breath, "the band that no one could beat whatever but two indeed in the Eisteddfod that for all North Wales was look you."

"I see," said the Doctor, "I see. That's splendid. Well, will you please go into your tent, the little tent over there."

"To march about you would not like us?" suggested the stationmaster, "we have a fine yellow flag, look you, that embroidered for us was in silks."

"No, .Into the tent,"

The stationmaster went back to consult with his fellow-musicians. There was a baying and growling and yapping as of the jungle at moonrise, and presently he came forward again with an obsequious, sidelong shuffle.

"Three pounds you pay us would you said indeed to at the sports play."

"Yes, yes, that's right, three pounds. Into the tent,"

"Nothing whatever we can play without the money first," said the stationmaster firmly.

"How would it be," said Philbrick, "if I gave him a clout on the ear?"

"No, no, I beg you to do nothing of the kind. You

have not lived in Wales as long as I have." He took a note-case from his pocket, the sight of which seemed to galvanize the musicians into life, they crowded round, twitching and chattering. The Doctor took out three pound notes and gave them to the stationmaster. "There you are, Davies," he said. "Now take your men into the tent. They are on no account to emerge until after tea, do you understand?"

The band slunk away, and Paul and the Doctor turned back towards the Castle.

"The Welsh character is an interesting study," said Dr. Fagan. "I have often considered writing a little monograph on the subject, but I was afraid it might make me unpopular in the village. The ignorant speak of them as Celts, which is of course wholly erroneous. They are of pure Iberian stock -- the aboriginal inhabitants of Europe who survive only in Portugal and the Basque district. Celts readily intermarry with their neighbours and absorb them. From the earliest times the Welsh have been looked upon as an unclean people. It is thus that they have preserved their racial integrity. Their sons and daughters rarely mate with human-kind except their own blood relations. In Wales there was no need for legislation to prevent the conquering people intermarrying with the conquered. In Ireland that was necessary, for there intermarriage was a political matter. In Wales, it was moral. I hope, by the way, you have no Welsh blood?"

"None whatever," said Paul.

"I was sure you had not, but one cannot be too careful. I once spoke of this subject to the sixth form and learned later that one of them had a Welsh grandmother. I am afraid it hurt his feelings terribly, poor little chap. She came from Pembrokeshire, too, which is of course quite a different matter I often think," he continued, "that we can trace almost all the disasters of English history to the influence of Wales. Think of Edward of Carnarvon, the first Prince of Wales, a perverse life, Pennyfeather, and an unseemly death, then the Tudors and the dissolution of the Church, then Lloyd George, the temperance movement. Nonconformity and lust stalking hand in hand through the country, wasting and ravaging. But perhaps

you think I exaggerate? I have a certain rhetorical tendency, I admit."

"No, no," said Paul.

"The Welsh," said the Doctor, "are the only nation in the world that has produced no graphic or plastic art, no architecture, no drama. They just sing," he said with disgust, "sing and blow down wind instruments of plated silver. They are deceitful because they cannot discern truth from falsehood, depraved because they cannot discern the consequences of their indulgence. Let us consider," he continued, "the etymological derivations of the Welsh language."

But here he was interrupted by a breathless little boy who panted down the drive to meet them. "Please, sir. Lord and Lady Circumference have arrived, sir They're in the library with Miss Florence. She asked me to tell you."

"The sports will start in ten minutes," said the Doctor "Run and tell the other boys to change and go at once to the playing-fields. I will talk to you about the Welsh again. It is a matter to which I have given some thought, and I can see that you are sincerely interested. Come in with me and see the Circumferences."

Flossie was talking to them in the library.

"Yes, isn't it a sweet colour?" she was saying. "I do like something bright myself. Diana made it for me, she does knit a treat, does Diana, but of course I chose the colour, you know, because, you see, Diana's taste is all for wishy-washy greys and browns. Mournful, you know. Well, here's the dad. Lady Circumference was just saying how much she likes my frock what you said was vulgar, so there,"

A stout elderly woman dressed in a tweed coat and skirt and jaunty Tyrolean hat advanced to the Doctor.

"Hullo!" she said in a deep bass voice, "how are you? Sorry if we're late. Circumference ran over a fool of a boy. I've just been chaffing your daughter here about her frock. Wish I was young enough to wear that kind of

thing. Older I get the more I like colour. We're both pretty long in the tooth, eh?" She gave Dr. Fagan a hearty shake of the hand, that obviously caused him acute pain. Then she turned to Paul.

"So you're the Doctor's hired assassin, eh? Well, I hope you keep a firm hand on my toad of a son. How's he doin'?"

"Quite well," said Paul

"Nonsense," said Lady Circumference. "The boy's a dunderhead. If he wasn't he wouldn't be here. He wants beatin' and hittin' and knockin' about generally, and then he'll be no good. That grass is shockin' bad on the terrace, Doctor, you ought to sand it down and resow it, but you'll have to take that cedar down if you ever want it to grow properly at the side. I hate cuttin' down a tree -- like losin' a tooth -- but you have to choose, tree or grass, you can't keep 'em both. What d'you pay your head man?"

As she was talking, Lord Circumference emerged from the shadows and shook Paul's hand. He had a long fair moustache and large watery eyes which reminded Paul a little of Mr. Prendergast.

"How do you do?" he said.

"How do you do?" said Paul.

"Fond of sport, eh?" he said, "I mean these sort of sports?"

"Oh yes," said Paul, "I think they're so good for the boys."

"Do you? Do you think that?" said Lord Circumference very earnestly, "you think they're good for the boys?"

"Yes," said Paul; "don't you?"

"Me ? Yes, oh yes. I think so, too. Very good for the boys."

"So useful in the case of a war or anything," said Paul.

"D'you think so ? D'you really and truly think so? That there's going to be another war, I mean?"

"Yes, I'm sure of it, aren't you?"

"Yes, of course, I'm sure of it too. And that awful bread, and people coming on to one's own land and telling one what one's to do with one's own butter and milk, and commandeering one's horses! Oh yes, all over again! My wife shot her hunters rather than let them go to the army. And girls in breeches on all the farms! All over again! Who do you think it will be this time?"

"The Americans," said Paul stoutly.

"No, indeed, I hope not. We had German prisoners on two of the farms That wasn't so bad, but if they start putting Americans on my land, I'll just refuse to stand it. My daughter brought an American down to luncheon the other day, and, do you know... ?"

"Dig it and dung it," said Lady Circumference "Only it's got to be dug deep, mind. Now, how did your calceolarias do last year ?"

"I really have no idea," said the Doctor. "Flossie, how did our calceolarias do?"

"Lovely," said Flossie.

"I don't believe a word of it," said Lady Circumference. "Nobody's calceolarias did well last year"

"Shall we adjourn to the playing-fields?" said the Doctor. "I expect they are all waiting for us."

Talking cheerfully, the party crossed the hall and went down the steps.

"Your drive's awful wet," said Lady Circumference "I expect there's a blocked pipe somewhere. Sure it ain't sewage?"

"I was never any use at short distances," Lord Circumference was saying. "I was always a slow starter, but I was once eighteenth in the Crick at Rugby. We didn't take sports so seriously at the 'Varsity when I was up; everybody rode. What college were you at?"

"Scone."

"Scone, were you*? Ever come across a young nephew of my wife's called Alastair Digby-Vaine-Trumpmngton?"

"I just met him," said Paul.

"That's very interesting. Greta, Mr. Pennyfoot knows Alastair."

"Does he! Well, that boy's doing no good for himself. Got fined twenty pounds the other day, his mother told me. Seemed proud of it. If my brother had been alive he'd have licked all that out of the young cub. It takes a man to bring up a man."

"Yes," said Lord Circumference meekly.

"Who else do you know at Oxford? Do you know Freddy French- Wise?"

"No"

"Or Tom Obblethwaite, or that youngest Castleton boy?"

"No, I'm afraid not. I had a great friend called Potts."

"Potts," said Lady Circumference, and left it at that.

All the school and several local visitors were assembled in the field. Grimes stood by himself, looking depressed. Mr. Prendergast, flushed and unusually vivacious, was talking to the Vicar. As the headmaster's party came into sight the Llanabba Silver Band struck up Men of Harlech.

"Shockin' noise," commented Lady Circumference graciously.

The head prefect came forward and presented her with

a programme, be-ribboned and embossed in gold. Another prefect set a chair for her. She sat down with the Doctor next to her and Lord Circumference on the other side of him.

"Pennyfeather," cried the Doctor above the band, "start them racing."

Philbrick gave Paul a megaphone. "I found this in the pavilion," he said. "I thought it might be useful."

"Who's that extraordinary man?" asked Lady Circumference.

"He is the boxing coach and swimming professional," said the Doctor. "A finely developed figure, don't you think?"

"First race," said Paul through the megaphone, "under sixteen. Quarter-mile," He read out Grimes's list of starters.

"What's Tangent doin' in this race?" said Lady Circumference. "The boy can't run an inch."

The silver band stopped playing.

"The course," said Paul, "starts from the pavilion, goes round that clump of elms."

"Beeches," corrected Lady Circumference loudly.

" and ends in front of the bandstand. Starter, Mr. Prendergast, timekeeper, Captain Grimes."

"I shall say, 'Are you ready? one, two, three ! ' and then fire," said Mr. Prendergast. "Are you ready? One"

There was a terrific report.

"Oh dear' I'm sorry."

-- but the race had begun. Clearly Tangent was not going to win, he was sitting on the grass crying because he had been wounded in the foot by Mr. Prendergast's bullet. Philbrick carried him, wailing dismally, into the refresh-

ment tent, where Dingy helped him off with his shoe. His heel was slightly grazed. Dingy gave him a large slice of cake, and he hobbled out surrounded by a sympathetic crowd.

"That won't hurt him," said Lady Circumference, "but I think someone ought to remove the pistol from that old man before he does anything serious."

"I knew that was going to happen," said Lord Circumference.

"A most unfortunate beginning," said the Doctor.

"Am I going to die?" said Tangent, his mouth full of cake.

"For God's sake, look after Prendy," said Grimes in Paul's ear, "The man's as tight as a lord, and on one whisky, too."

"First blood to me," said Mr. Prendergast gleefully.

"The last race will be run again," said Paul down the megaphone. "Starter, Mr. Philbrick; timekeeper, Mr. Prendergast."

"On your marks ' Get set." Bang went the pistol, this time without disaster. The six little boys scampered off through the mud, disappeared behind the beeches and returned rather more slowly. Captain Grimes and Mr. Prendergast held up a piece of tape.

"Well run, sir," shouted Colonel Sidebotham, "Jolly good race!"

"Capital," said Mr. Prendergast, and dropping his end of the tape, he sauntered over to the Colonel. "I can see you are a fine judge of a race, sir. So was I once. So's Grimes. A capital fellow. Grimes, a bounder, you know, but a capital fellow. Bounders can be capital fellows, don't you agree, Colonel Slidebottom? In fact, I'd go further and say that capital fellows are bounders. What d'you say to that? I wish you'd stop pulling at my arm, Pennyfeather. Colonel Shybotham and I are just having a most interesting conversation about bounders."

The silver band struck up again, and Mr. Prendergast began a little jig, saying, "Capital fellow," and snapping his fingers. Paul led him to the refreshment tent.

"Dingy wants you to help her in there," he said firmly, "and, for God's sake, don't come out until you feel better."

"I never felt better in my life," said Mr. Prendergast indignantly. "Capital fellow, capital fellow!"

"It is not my affair, of course," said Colonel Sidebotham, "but if you ask me I should say that man had been drinking."

"He was talking very excitedly to me," said the Vicar, "about some apparatus for warming a church in Worthing and about the Apostolic Claims of the Church of Abyssinia. I confess I could not follow him clearly. He seems deeply interested in Church matters. Are you quite sure he is right in the head? I have noticed again and again since I have been in the Church that lay interest in ecclesiastical matters is often a prelude to insanity."

"Drink, pure and simple," said the Colonel, "I wonder where he got it? I could do with a spot of whisky."

"Quarter-mile open!" said Paul through his megaphone. Presently, the Clutterbucks arrived. Both the parents were stout. They brought with them two small children, a governess, and an elder son. They debouched from the car one by one, stretching their limbs in evident relief.

"This is Sam," said Mr. Clutterbuck, "just down from Cambridge. He's joined me in the business, and we've brought the nippers along for a treat. Don't mind do you, Doc? And last, but not least, my wife."

Dr. Fagan greeted them with genial condescension and found them seats.

"I am afraid you have missed all the jumping events," he said, "But I have a list of the results here. You will see that Percy has done extremely well."

"Didn't know the little beggar had it in him. See that, Martha ? Percy's won the high-jump and the long-jump and the hurdles. How's your young hopeful been doing, Lady Circumference ?"

"My boy has been injured in the foot," said Lady Circumference coldly.

"Dear me! Not badly, I hope ? Did he twist his ankle in the jumping ?"

"No," said Lady Circumference, "he was shot at by one of the assistant masters. But it is kind of you to inquire."

"Three Miles Open," announced Paul. "The course of six laps will be run as before."

"On your marks! Get set" Bang! went Philbrick's revolver. Off trotted the boys on another race.

"Father," said Flossie, "don't you think it's time for the tea interval ?"

"Nothing can be done before Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde arrives," said the Doctor.

Round and round the muddy track trotted the athletes while the silver band played sacred music unceasingly.

"Last lap," announced Paul.

The school and the visitors crowded about the tape to cheer the winner. Amid loud applause, Clutterbuck breasted the tape well ahead of the others.

"Well run! Oh, good, jolly good, sir," cried Colonel Sidebotham.

"Good old Percy! That's the stuff," said Mr. Clutterbuck.

"Well run, Percy," chorused the two little Clutterbucks, prompted by their governess.

"That boy cheated," said Lady Circumference, "He

only went round five times. I counted."

"I think unpleasantness so mars the afternoon," said the Vicar.

"How dare you suggest such a thing?" asked Mrs. Clutterbuck. "I appeal to the referee. Percy ran the full course, didn't he?"

"Clutterbuck wins," said Captain Grimes.

"Fiddlesticks!" said Lady Circumference, "He deliberately lagged behind and joined the others as they went behind the beeches. The little toad."

"Really, Greta," said Lord Circumference, "I think we ought to abide by the referee's decision."

"Well, they can't expect me to give away the prizes, then. Nothing would induce me to give that boy a prize."

"Do you understand, madam, that you are bringing a serious accusation against my son's honour?"

"Serious accusation fiddlesticks! What he wants is a jolly good hidin!"

"No doubt you judge other people's sons by your own. Let me tell you. Lady Circumference."

"Don't attempt to browbeat me, sir. I know a cheat when I see one."

At this stage of the discussion the Doctor left Mrs. Hope-Browne's side, where he had been remarking upon her son's progress in geometry, and joined the group round the winning-post.

"If there is a disputed decision," he said genially, "they shall race again."

"Percy has won already," said Mr. Clutterbuck. "He has been adjudged the winner."

"Splendid! splendid! A promising little athlete. I congratulate you, Clutterbuck."

"But he only ran five laps," said Lady Circumference.

"Then clearly he has won the five furlongs race, a very exacting length."

"But the other boys," said Lady Circumference, almost beside herself with rage, "have run six lengths."

"Then they," said the Doctor imperturbably, "are first, second, third, fourth and fifth respectively in the Three Miles. Clearly there has been some confusion. Diana, I think we might now serve tea."

Things were not easy, but there was fortunately a distraction, for as he spoke an enormous limousine of dove-grey and silver stole soundlessly on to the field.

"But what could be more opportune? Here is Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde."

Three light skips brought him to the side of the car, but the footman was there before him. The door opened, and from the cushions within emerged a tall young man in a clinging dove-grey overcoat. After him, like the first breath of spring in the Champs Elysees, came Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde-- two lizard-skin feet, silk legs, chinchilla body, a tight little black hat, pinned with platinum and diamonds, and the high invariable voice that may be heard in any Ritz Hotel from New York to Buda-Pesth.

"I hope you don't mind my bringing Chokey, Dr Fagan?" she said, "He's just crazy about sport!"

"I sure am that," said Chokey.

"Dear Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde," said Dr. Fagan; "dear, dear, Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde," He pressed her glove, and for the moment was at a loss for words of welcome, for "Chokey," though graceful of bearing and irreproachably dressed, was a negro.

CHAPTER IX

The Sports-- continued

THE refreshment tent looked very nice. The long table across the centre was covered with a white cloth. Bowls of flowers were ranged down it at regular intervals, and between them plates of sandwiches and cakes and jugs of lemonade and champagne-cup. Behind it against a background of palms stood the four Welsh housemaids in clean caps and aprons pouring out tea. Behind them again sat Mr. Prendergast, a glass of champagne-cup in his hand, his wig slightly awry. He rose unsteadily to his feet at the approach of the guests, made a little bow, and then sat down again rather suddenly.

"Will you take round the foie gras sandwiches, Mr. Pennyfeather?" said Dingy, "They are not for the boys or Captain Grimes."

"One for little me," said Flossie as he passed her.

Philbrick, evidently regarding himself as one of the guests, was engaged in a heated discussion on greyhound-racing with Sam Clutterbuck.

"What price the coon?" he asked as Paul gave him a sandwich.

"It does my heart good to see old Prendy enjoying himself," said Grimes, "Pity he shot that kid, though."
"There's not much the matter with him to see the way he's eating his tea. I say, this is rather a poor afternoon, isn't it?"

"Circulate, old boy, circulate. Things aren't going too smoothly."

Nor indeed were they. The sudden ebullition of ill-feeling over the Three-mile race, though checked by the arrival of Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde, was by no means forgotten. There were two distinctly hostile camps in the tea-tent. On one side stood the Circumferences, Tangent, the Vicar, Colonel Sidebotham and the Hope-Brownes, on the other the seven Clutterbucks, Philbrick, Flossie and two or three parents who had been snubbed already that afternoon by Lady Circumference. No one spoke of the race, but outraged sportsmanship glinted

perilously in every eye. Several parents, intent on their tea, crowded round Dingy and the table. Eminently aloof from all these stood Chokey and Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde. Clearly the social balance was delicately poised, and the issue depended upon them. With or without her nigger, Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde was a woman of vital importance.

"Why, Dr. Fagan," she was saying, "it is too disappointing that we've missed the sports. We had just the slowest journey, stopping all the time to see the churches. You can't move Chokey once he's seen an old church. He's just crazy about culture, aren't you, darling?"

"I sure am that," said Chokey.

"Are you interested in music?" said the Doctor tactfully.

"Well, just you hear that, Baby," said Chokey, "am I interested in music? I should say I am."

"He plays just too divinely," said Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde.

"Has he heard my new records, would you say?"

"No, darling, I don't expect he has."

"Well, just you hear them, sir, and then you'll know -- am I interested in music."

"Now, darling, don't get discouraged. I'll take you over and introduce you to Lady Circumference. It's his inferiority-complex, the angel. He's just crazy to meet the aristocracy, aren't you, my sweet?"

"I sure am that," said Chokey.

"I think it's an insult bringing a nigger here," said Mrs. Clutterbuck, "It's an insult to our own women."

"Niggers are all right," said Philbrick. "Where I draw a line is a Chink, nasty inhuman things. I had a pal bumped off by a Chink once. Throat cut horrible, it was, from ear to ear."

"Good gracious," said the Clutterbuck governess, "was that in the Boxer rising ?"

"No," said Philbrick cheerfully, "Saturday night in the Edgware Road. Might have happened to any of us."

"What did the gentleman say ?" asked the children.

"Never you mind, my dears. Run and have some more of the green cake."

They ran off obediently, but the little boy was later heard whispering to his sister as she knelt at her prayers, "cut horrible from ear to ear," so that until quite late in her life Miss Clutterbuck would feel a little faint when she saw a 'bus that was going to the Edgware Road.

"I've got a friend lives in. Savannah," said Sam, "and he's told me a thing or two about niggers. Of course it's hardly a thing to talk about before the ladies, but, to put it bluntly, they have uncontrollable passions. See what I mean ?"

"What a terrible thing," said Grimes.

"You can't blame 'em, mind, it's just their nature. Animal, you know. Still, what I do say is, since they're like that, the less we see of them the better."

"Quite," said Mr. Clutterbuck.

"I had such a curious conversation just now," Lord Circumference was saying to Paul, "with your band-master over there. He asked me whether I should like to meet his sister-in-law, and when I said, 'Yes, I should be delighted to,' he said that it would cost a pound normally, but that he'd let me have special terms. What can he have meant, Mr. Pennyfoot ?"

" 'Pon my soul," Colonel Sidebotham was saying to the Vicar, "I don't like the look of that nigger. I saw enough of Fuzzy-Wuzzy in the Soudan -- devilish good enemy and devilish bad friend. I'm going across to talk to Mrs. Clutterbuck. Between ourselves, I think Lady C went a bit far. I didn't see the race myself, but there are

limits."

"Rain ain't doin' the turnip crop any good," Lady Circumference was saying.

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde. "Are you in England for long?"

"Why, I live in England, of course," said Lady Circumference.

"My dear, how divine! But don't you find it just too expensive?"

This was one of Lady Circumference's favourite topics, but somehow she did not feel disposed to enlarge on it to Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde with the same gusto as when she was talking to Mrs. Sidebotham and the Vicar's wife. She never felt quite at ease with people richer than herself.

"Well, we all feel the wind a bit since the war," she said briefly. "How's Bobby Pastmaster?"

"Dotty," said Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde, "terribly dotty, and he and Chokey don't get on. You'll like Chokey. He's just crazy about England, too. We've been round all the cathedrals, and now we're going to start on the country houses. We were thinking of running over to see you at Castle Tangent one afternoon."

"That would be delightful, but I'm afraid we are in London at present. Which did you like best of the cathedrals, Mr. Chokey?"

"Chokey's not really his name, you know. The angel's called 'Mr. Sebastien Cholmondley.'"

"Well," said Mr. Cholmondley, "they were all fine, just fine. When I saw the cathedrals my heart just rose up and sang within me. I sure am crazy about culture. You folk think because we're coloured we don't care about nothing but jazz. Why, I'd give all the jazz in the world for just one little stone from one of your cathedrals."

"It's quite true. He would."

"Well, that's most interesting, Mr. Cholmondley. I used to live just outside Salisbury when I was a girl, but, little as I like jazz, I never felt quite as strongly as that about it."

"Salisbury is full of historical interest, Lady Circumference, but in my opinion Yorkminster is the more refined."

"Oh, you angel," said Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde, "I could eat you up every bit."

"And is this your first visit to an English school?" asked the Doctor.

"I should say not. Will you tell the Doctor the schools I've seen?"

"He's been to them all, even the quite new ones. In fact, he liked the new ones best."

"They were more spacious. Have you ever seen Oxford?"

"Yes, in fact, I was educated there."

"Were you, now? I've seen Oxford and Cambridge and Eton and Harrow. That's me all over. That's what I like, see? I appreciate art. There's plenty coloured people come over here and don't see nothing but a few night clubs. I read Shakespeare," said Chokey, "Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear. Ever read them?"

"Yes," said the Doctor, "as a matter of fact, I have."

"My race," said Chokey, "is essentially an artistic race. We have the child's love of song and colour and the child's natural good taste. All you white folks despise the poor coloured man."

"No, no," said the Doctor.

"Let him say his piece, the darling," said Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde. "Isn't he divine?"

"You folks all think the coloured man hasn't got a soul. Anything's good enough for the poor coloured man. Beat him, put him in chains, load him with burdens."

Here Paul observed a responsive glitter in Lady Circumference's eye.

"But all the time that poor coloured man has a soul same as you have. Don't he breathe the same as you? Don't he eat and drink? Don't he love Shakespeare and cathedrals and the paintings of the old masters same as you? Isn't he just asking for your love and help to raise him from the servitude into which your forefathers plunged him? Oh, say, white folks, why don't you stretch out a helping hand to the poor coloured man, that's as good as you are, if you'll only let him be?"

"My sweet," said Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde, "you mustn't get discouraged. They're all friends here."

"Is that so?" said Chokey. "Should I sing them a song?"

"No, don't do that, darling. Have some tea."

"I had a friend in Paris," said the Clutterbuck governess, "whose sister knew a girl who married one of the black soldiers during the war, and you wouldn't believe what he did to her. Joan and Peter, run and see if Daddy wants some more tea. He tied her up with a razor strop and left her on the stone floor for the night without food or covering. And then it was over a year before she could get a divorce."

"Used to cut the tent ropes," Colonel Sidebotham was saying, "and then knife the poor beggars through the canvas."

"You can see 'em in Shaftesbury Avenue and Charing Cross Road any night of the week," Sam Clutterbuck was saying, "The women just hanging on to 'em."

"The mistake was ever giving them their freedom," said the Vicar. "They were far happier and better looked after before."

"It's queer," said Flossie, "that a woman with as much money as Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde should wear such dull clothes."

"That ring didn't cost less than five hundred," said Philbrick.

"Let's go and talk to the Vicar about God," said Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde. "Chokey thinks religion is just divine."

"My race is a very spiritual one," said Chokey.

"The band has been playing Men of Harlech for over half an hour," said the Doctor. "Diana, do go and tell them to try something else."

"I sometimes think I'm getting rather bored with coloured people," Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde said to Lady Circumference, "Are you ?"

"I have never had the opportunity."

"I daresay you'd be good with them. They take a lot of living up to, they are so earnest. Who's that dear, dim, drunk little man ?"

"That is the person who shot my son."

"My dear, how too shattering for you. Not dead, I hope ? Chokey shot a man at a party the other night. He gets gay at times, you know It's only when he's on his best behaviour that he's so class-conscious. I must go and rescue the Vicar."

The stationmaster came into the tent, crab-like and obsequious.

"Well, my good man ?" said the Doctor.

"The young lady I have been telling that no other tunes can we play whatever with the lady smoking at her cigarette look you."

"God bless my soul; Why not ?"

"The other tunes are all holy tunes look you. Blasphemy it would be to play the songs of Sion while the lady at a cigarette smokes whatever. Men of Harlech is good music look you."

"This is most unfortunate. I can hardly ask Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde to stop smoking. Frankly I regard this as impertinence."

"But no man can you ask against his Maker to blaspheme whatever unless him to pay more you were. Three pounds for the music is good and one for the blasphemy look you."

Dr. Fagan gave him another pound. The stationmaster retired, and in a few minutes the silver band began a singularly emotional rendering of In Thy Courts No More are needed, Sun by day and moon by night.

CHAPTER X

Post Mortem

AS the last car drove away the Doctor and his daughters and Paul and Grimes walked up the drive together towards the Castle.

"Frankly, the day has been rather a disappointment to me," said the Doctor. "Nothing seemed to go quite right in spite of all our preparations."

"And expense," said Dingy.

"I am sorry, too, that Mr. Prendergast should have had that unfortunate disagreement with Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde's coloured friend. In all the ten years during which we have worked together, I have never known Mr. Prendergast so self-assertive. It was not becoming of him. Nor was it Philbrick's place to join in. I was seriously alarmed. They seemed so angry, and all about some minor point of ecclesiastical architecture."

"Mr. Cholmondley was very sensitive," said Flossie.

"Yes, he seemed to think that Mr. Prendergast's insistence on the late development of the rood-screen was in some way connected with colour-prejudice. I wonder why that was? To my mind it showed a very confused line of thought. Still, it would have been more seemly if Mr. Prendergast had let the matter drop, and what could Philbrick know of the matter?"

"Philbrick is not an ordinary butler," said Dingy.

"No, indeed not," said the Doctor, "I heartily deplore his jewellery."

"I didn't like Lady Circumference's speech," said Flossie, "Did you?"

"I did not," said the Doctor, "nor, I think, did Mrs. Clutterbuck. I thought her reference to the Five Furlong race positively brutal. I was glad Clutterbuck had done so well in the jumping yesterday."

"She rather wanders from the point, doesn't she?" said Dingy. "All that about hunting, I mean."

"I don't think Lady Circumference is conscious of any definite divisions in the various branches of sport. I have often observed in women of her type a tendency to regard all athletics as inferior forms of foxhunting. It is not logical. Besides, she was nettled at some remark of Mr. Cholmondley's about cruelty to animals. As you say, it was irrelevant and rather unfortunate. I also resented the references to the Liberal Party. Mr. Clutterbuck has stood three times, you know. Taken as a whole, it was not a happy speech. I was quite glad when I saw her drive away."

"What a pretty car Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde has got!" said Flossie, "but how ostentatious of her to bring a footman."

"I can forgive the footman," said Dingy, "but I can't forgive Mr. Cholmondley. He asked me whether I had ever heard of a writer called Thomas Hardy."

"He asked me to go to Reigate with him for the weekend," said Flossie, "in rather a sweet way, too."

"Florence, I trust you refused?"

"Oh yes," said Flossie sadly, "I refused"

They went on up the drive in silence. Presently Dingy asked, "What are we going to do about those fireworks you insisted on buying? Everyone has gone away."

"I don't feel in a mood for fireworks," said the Doctor.
"Perhaps another time, but not now."

Back in the Common Room, Paul and Grimes subsided moodily into the two easy-chairs. The fire, unattended since luncheon, had sunk to a handful of warm ashes.

"Well, old boy," said Grimes, "so that's over."

"Yes," said Paul.

"All the gay throng melted away?"

"Yes," said Paul.

"Back to the daily round and cloistral calm'd."

"Yes," said Paul.

"As a beano," said Grimes, "I have known better."

"Yes," said Paul.

"Lady C 's hardly what you might call bonhomous."

"Hardly."

"Old Prendy made rather an ass of himself!"

"Yes."

"Hullo, old boy! You sound a bit flat. Feeling the strain of the social vortex, a bit giddy after the gay wheel, eh?"

"I say. Grimes," said Paul, "what d'you suppose the relationship is between Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde and that nigger?"

"Well, I don't suppose she trots round with him just for the uplift of his conversation, do you ?"

"No, I suppose not."

"In fact, I don't mind diagnosing a simple case of good old sex."

"Yes, I suppose you're right."

"I'm sure of it Great Scott, what's that noise?"

It was Mr. Prendergast.

"Prendy, old man," said Grimes, "you've let down the morale of the Common Room a pretty good wallop."

"Damn the Common Room," said Mr. Prendergast, "What does the Common Room know about rood-screens ?"

"That's all right, old boy. We're all friends here. What you say about rood-screens goes."

"They'll be questioning the efficacy of infant baptism next. The Church has never countenanced lay opinion on spiritual matters. Now if it were a question of food and drink," said Mr. Prendergast, "if it were a question of drink. But not infant baptism. Just drink" And he sat down.

"A sad case, brother," said Grimes, "truly a sad case. Prendy, do you realize that in two minutes the bell will go for Prep and you're on duty ?"

"Ding, dong, dell, Pussy's in the well."

"Prendy, that's irrelevant."

"I know several songs about bells. Funeral bells, wedding bells, sacring bells, sheep-bells, fire-bells, door-bells, dumb-bells and just plain bells."

Paul and Grimes looked at each other sadly.

"It seems to me," said Paul, "that one of us will have to take Prep for him to-night"

"No, no, old boy, that'll be all right," said Grimes. "You and I are off to Mrs. Roberts. Prendy gives me a thirst."

"But we can't leave him like this"

"He'll be all right. The little beasts can't make any more noise than they do usually."

"You don't think the old man will find him?"

"Not a chance."

The bell rang. Mr. Prendergast jumped to his feet, straightened his wig and steadied himself gravely against the chimneypiece.

"There's a good chap," said Grimes gently, "Just you trot down the passage to the little boys and have a good nap."

Singing quietly to himself, Mr. Prendergast sauntered down the passage.

"I hope he's none the worse for this," said Grimes, "You know, I feel quite fatherly towards old Prendy. He did give it to that blackamoor about Church architecture, bless him."

Arm in arm they went down the main avenue towards the inn

"Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde asked me to call on her in London," said Paul.

"Did she? Well, just you go. I've never been much of a one for society and the smart set myself, but if you like that sort of thing, Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde is the goods all right. Never open a paper but there's a photograph of her at some place or other."

"Does she photograph well?" asked Paul, "I should rather think that she would."

Grimes looked at him narrowly. "Fair to middling
Why the sudden interest ?"

"Oh, I don't know. I was just wondering."

At Mrs. Roberts they found the Llanabba Silver Band
chattering acrimoniously over the division of the spoils.

"All the afternoon, the band I have led in Men of
Harlech and sacred music too look you and they will not
give me a penny more than themselves whatever. The
college gentleman whatever if it is right I ask," said the
stationmaster, "me with a sister-in-law to support too
look you."

"Now don't bother, old boy," said Grimes, "because, if
you do, I'll tell your pals about the extra pound you got
out of the Doctor."

The discussion was resumed in Welsh, but it was clear
that the stationmaster was slowly giving way.

"That's settled him all right. Take my tip, old boy,
never get mixed up in a Welsh wrangle. It doesn't end in
blows, like an Irish one, but goes on for ever. They'll still
be discussing that three pounds at the end of term; just
you see."

"Has Mr. Beste-Chetwynde been dead long ?" asked Paul.

"I shouldn't say so, why?"

"I was just wondering."

They sat for some time smoking in silence.

"If Beste-Chetwynde is fifteen," said Paul, "that doesn't
necessarily make her more than thirty-one, does it?"

"Old boy," said Grimes, "you're in love."

"Nonsense !"

"Smitten ?" said Grimes.

"No, no."

"The tender passion?"

"No."

"Cupid's jolly little darts ?"

"No."

"Spring fancies, love's young dream ?"

"Nonsense."

"Not even a quickening of the pulse?"

"No."

"A sweet despair?"

"Certainly not."

"A trembling hope?"

"No."

"A frisson? a Je ne sais quoi?"

"Nothing of the sort."

"Liar !" said Grimes.

There was another long pause.

"Grimes," said Paul at length, "I wonder if you can be right?"

"Sure of it, old boy. Just you go in and win. Here's to the happy pair! May all your troubles be little ones."

In a state of mind totally new to him, Paul accompanied Grimes back to the Castle. Prep was over. Mr. Prendergast was leaning against the fireplace with a contented smile on his face.

"Hullo, Prendy, old wine-skin! How are things with you?"

"Admirable," said Mr. Prendergast, "I have never known them better. I have just caned twenty-three boys."

CHAPTER XI

Philbrick -- continued

NEXT day, Mr. Prendergast's self-confidence had evaporated.

"Head hurting?" asked Grimes.

"Well, as a matter of fact, it is rather."

"Eyes tired? Thirsty?"

"Yes, a little."

"Poor old Prendy! Don't I know? Still, it was worth it, wasn't it?"

"I don't remember very clearly all that happened, but I walked back to the Castle with Philbrick, and he told me all about his life. It appears he is really a rich man and not a butler at all."

"I know," said Paul and Grimes simultaneously.

"You both knew? Well, it came as a great surprise to me, although I must admit I had noticed a certain superiority in his manner. But I find almost everyone like that. Did he tell you his whole story -- about his shooting the Portuguese Count and everything?"

"No, he didn't tell me that," said Paul.

"Shooting a Portuguese count? Are you sure you've got hold of the right end of the stick, old boy?"

"Yes, yes, I'm sure of it. It impressed me very much. You see Philbrick is really Sir Solomon Philbrick, the shipowner."

"The novelist, you mean," said Grimes.

"The retired burglar," said Paul.

The three masters looked at each other.

"Old boys, it seems to me someone's been pulling our legs."

"Well, this is the story that he told me," continued Mr. Prendergast. "It all started from our argument about Church architecture with the black man. Apparently Philbrick has a large house in Carlton House Terrace."

"Camberwell Green."

"Cheyne Walk."

"Well, I'm telling you what he told me. He has a house in Carlton House Terrace. I remember the address well because a sister of Mrs. Crump's was once governess in a house in the same row, and he used to live there with an actress who, I regret to say, was not his wife. I forget her name, but I know it is a particularly famous one. He was sitting in the Athenaeum Club one day when the Archbishop of Canterbury approached him and said that the Government were anxious to make him a peer, but that it was impossible while he lived a life of such open irregularity. Philbrick turned down the offer. He is a Roman Catholic, I forgot to tell you. But all that doesn't really explain why he is here. It only shows how important he is. His ships weigh hundreds and hundreds of tons, he told me.

"Well, one evening, he and this play-actress were giving a party, and they were playing baccarat. There was a Portuguese Count there-- a very dark man from the Legation, Philbrick said. The game rapidly became a personal contest between these two Philbrick won over and over again until the Count had no more money left and had signed many IOU's. Finally, very late in the night, he took from the Countess's hand -- she was sitting beside him with haggard eyes watching him play -- an enormous emerald. As big as a golf ball, Philbrick said.

" 'This has been an heirloom of my family since the first crusade,' said the Portuguese Count. 'It is the one thing which I had hoped to leave to my poor, poor little son ' "

And he tossed it on to the table.

" 'I will wager against it my new four-funnel, turbine-driven liner called The Queen of Arcady,' said Philbrick.

" That's not enough,' said the Portuguese Countess.

" 'And my steam-yacht Swallow and four tugs and a coaling-barge,' said Philbrick. All the party rose to applaud his reckless bid.

"The hand was played Philbrick had won. With a low bow he returned the emerald to the Portuguese Countess 'For your son*' he said again the guests applauded, but the Portuguese Count was livid with rage.

'You have insulted my honour,' he said 'In Portugal we have only one way of dealing with such an occurrence! ' "There and then they went out into Hyde Park, which was quite close. They faced each other and fired, it was just dawn. At the feet of the Achilles statue, Philbrick shot the Portuguese Count dead. They left him with his smoking revolver in his hand. The Portuguese Countess kissed Philbrick's hand as she entered her car. 'No one will ever know,' she said 'It will be taken for suicide It is a secret between us. '

"But Philbrick was a changed man. The actress was driven from his house. He fell into a melancholy and paced up and down his deserted home at night, overpowered by his sense of guilt. The Portuguese Countess rang him up, but he told her it was the wrong number. Finally he went to a priest and confessed. He was told that for three years he must give up his house and wealth and live among the lowest of the low. That," said Mr. Prendergast simply, "is why he is here. Wasn't that the story he told you?"

"No, it wasn't," said Paul.

"Not the shade of a likeness," said Grimes. "He told me all about himself one evening at Mrs. Roberts'. It was like this: "

"Mr. Philbrick, senior, was a slightly eccentric sort of a cove. He made a big pile out of diamond mines while he

was quite young and settled in the country and devoted his declining years to literature. He had two kids Philbrick and a daughter called Gracie. From the start Philbrick was the apple of the old chap's eye, while he couldn't stick Miss Gracie at any price. Philbrick could spout Shakespeare and Hamlet and things by the yard before Gracie could read 'The cat sat on the mat '. When he was eight he had a sonnet printed in the local paper. After that Gracie wasn't in it anywhere. She lived with the servants like Cinderella, Philbrick said, while he, sensible little beggar, had the best of everything and quoted classics and flowery language to the old boy upstairs. After he left Cambridge he settled down in London and wrote away like blazes. The old man just loved that, he had all Philbrick's books bound in blue leather and put in a separate bookcase with a bust of Philbrick on top. Poor old Gracie found things a bit thin, so she ran off with a young chap in the motor trade who didn't know one end of a book from the other, or of a car for that matter, as it turned out. When the old boy popped off he left Philbrick's everything, except a few books to Gracie. The young man had only married her because he thought the old boy was bound to leave her something, so he hopped it. That didn't worry Philbrick. He lived for his art, he said. He just moved into a bigger house and went on writing away fifteen to the dozen. Gracie tried to get some money out of him more than once, but he was so busy writing books, he couldn't bother about her. At last she became a cook in a house at Southgate. Next year she died. That didn't worry Philbrick at first. Then after a week or so he noticed an odd thing. There was always a smell of cooking all over the house, in his study, in his bedroom, everywhere. He had an architect in who said he couldn't notice any smell, and rebuilt the kitchen and put in all sorts of ventilators. Still, the smell got worse. It used to hang about his clothes so that he didn't dare go out, a horrible fatty smell. He tried going abroad, but the whole of Pans reeked of English cooking. That was bad enough, but after a time plates began rattling round his bed when he tried to sleep at nights and behind his chair as he wrote his books. He used to wake up in the night and hear the frizzling of fried fish and the singing of kettles. Then he knew what it was it was Gracie haunting him. He went to the Society for Psychical Research, and they got through a conversation to Gracie. He asked how he could make reparation. She

said that he must live among servants for a year and write a book about them that would improve their lot.

He tried to go the whole hog at first and started as chef, but of course that wasn't really in his line, and the family he was with got so ill, he had to leave. So he came here. He says the book is most moving, and that he'll read me bits of it some day. Not quite the same story as Prendy's."

"No, it's not. By the way, did he say anything about marrying Dingy'?"

"Not a word. He said that as soon as the smell of cooking wore off he was going to be the happiest man in the world. Apparently he's engaged to a female poet in Chelsea. He's not the sort of cove I'd have chosen for a brother-in-law. But then Flossie isn't really the sort of wife I'd have chosen. These things happen, old boy."

Paul told them about the "Lamb and Flag" at Camberwell Green and about Toby Cruttwell. "D'you think that story is true, or yours, or Prendy's?" he asked.

"No," said Mr. Prendergast.

CHAPTER XII

The Agony of Captain Grimes

TWO days later Beste-Chetwynde and Paul were in the organ-loft of the Llanabba Pansh Church.

"I don't think I played that terribly well, do you, sir'?"

"No."

"Shall I stop for a bit*?"

"I wish you would."

"Tangent's foot has swollen up and turned black," said Beste-Chetwynde with relish.

"Poor little brute," said Paul.

"I had a letter from my mamma this morning," Beste-Chetwynde went on. "There's a message for you in it. Shall I read you what she says?"

He took out a letter written on the thickest possible paper. "The first part is all about racing and a row she's had with Chokey. Apparently he doesn't like the way she's rebuilt our house in the country. I think it was time she dropped that man, don't you?"

"What does she say about me?" asked Paul.

"She says, 'By the way, dear boy, I must tell you that the spelling in your last letters has been just too shattering for words. You know how terribly anxious I am for you to get on and go to Oxford, and, everything, and I have been thinking, don't you think it might be a good thing if we were to have a tutor next holidays? Would you think it too boring? Some one young who would fit in. I thought, would that good-looking young master you said you liked care to come? How much ought I to pay him? I never know these things. I don't mean the drunk one, tho' he was sweet too. ' I think that must be you, don't you?' said Beste-Chetwynde, "it can hardly be Captain Grimes"

"Well, I must think that over," said Paul, "It sounds rather a good idea."

"Well, yes," said Beste-Chetwynde doubtfully, "it might be all right, only there mustn't be too much of the schoolmaster about it. That man Prendergast beat me the other evening."

"And there'll be no organ lessons, either," said Paul.

Grimes did not receive the news as enthusiastically as Paul had hoped, he was sitting over the Common Room fire despondently biting his nails.

"Good, old boy ! That's splendid," he said abstractedly. "I'm glad, I am really."

"Well, you don't sound exactly gay."

"No, I'm not. Fact is, I'm in the soup again."

"Badly?"

"Up to the neck."

"My dear chap, I am sorry. What are you going to do about it?"

"I've done the only thing. I've announced my engagement."

"That'll please Flossie."

"Oh yes, she's as pleased as hell about it all, damn her nasty little eyes."

"What did the old man say?"

"Baffled him a bit, old boy. He's just thinking things out at the moment. Well, I expect everything'll be all right."

"I don't see why it shouldn't be."

"Well, there is a reason I don't think I told you before, but fact is, I'm married already."

That evening Paul received a summons from the Doctor. He wore a double-breasted dinner-jacket, which he smoothed uneasily over his hips at Paul's approach. He looked worried and old.

"Pennyfeather," he said, "I have this morning received a severe shock, two shocks in fact. The first was disagreeable, but not wholly unexpected. Your colleague. Captain Grimes, has been convicted before me, on evidence that leaves no possibility of his innocence, of a crime -- I might almost call it a course of action -- which I can neither understand nor excuse. I daresay I need not particularize. However, that is all a minor question. I have quite frequently met with similar cases during a long experience in our profession. But what has disturbed and grieved me more than I can moderately express is the information that he is engaged to be married to my elder daughter. That, Pennyfeather, I had not expected. In the circumstances, it seemed a humiliation I might reasonably have

been spared. I tell you all this, Pennyfeather, because in our brief acquaintance I have learned to trust and respect you."

The Doctor sighed, drew from his pocket a handkerchief of crepe de chine, blew his nose with every accent of emotion, and resumed.

"He is not the son-in-law I should readily have chosen. I could have forgiven him his wooden leg, his slavish poverty, his moral turpitude, and his abominable features. I could even have forgiven him his incredible vocabulary, if only he had been a gentleman. I hope you do not think me a snob. You may have discerned in me a certain prejudice against the lower orders. It is quite true I do feel deeply on the subject. You see, I married one of them. But that, fortunately, is neither here nor there. What I really wished to say to you was this: I have spoken to the unhappy young woman my daughter, and find that she has no particular inclination towards Grimes. Indeed, I do not think that any daughter of mine could fall as low as that. But she is, for some reason, uncontrollably eager to be married to somebody fairly soon. Now, I should be quite prepared to offer a partnership in Llanabba to a son-in-law of whom I approved. The income of the school is normally not less than three thousand a year -- that is with the help of dear Diana's housekeeping -- and my junior partner would start at an income of a thousand, and of course succeed to a larger share upon my death. It is a prospect that many young men would find inviting. And I was wondering, Pennyfeather, whether by any chance, looking at the matter from a business-like point of view, without prejudice, you understand, fair and square, taking things as they are for what they are worth, facing facts, whether possibly you I wonder if I make myself plain ?"

"No," said Paul. "No, sir, I'm afraid it would be impossible. I hope I don't appear rude, but -- no, really, I'm afraid."

"That's all right, my dear boy. Not another word ! I quite understand. I was afraid that would be your answer. Well, it must be Grimes, then I don't think it would be any use approaching Mr. Prendergast."

"It was very kind of you to suggest it, sir."

"Not at all, not at all. The wedding shall take place a week to-day. You might tell Grimes that if you see him I don't want to have more to do with him than I can help I wonder whether it would be a good thing to give a small party ?" For a moment a light sprang up in Dr. Fagan's eyes and then died out. "No, no, there will be no party. The sports were not encouraging. Poor little Lord Tangent is still laid up, I hear."

Paul returned to the Common Room with the Doctor's message.

"Hell!" said Grimes, "I still hoped it might fall through."

"What do you want for a wedding present ?" Paul asked Grimes brightened. "What about that binge you promised me and Prendy ?"

"All right," said Paul. "We'll have it to-morrow."

The Hotel Metropole, Cwmpyddyg, is by far the grandest hotel in the north of Wales. It is situated on a high and healthy eminence overlooking the strip of water that railway companies have gallantly compared to the Bay of Naples. It was built in the ample days preceding the war, with a lavish expenditure on looking-glass and marble. To-day it shows signs of wear, for it has never been quite as popular as its pioneers hoped. There are cracks in the cement on the main terrace, the winter garden is draughty, and one comes disconcertingly upon derelict bathchairs in the Moorish Court. Besides this, none of the fountains ever plays, the string band that used to perform nightly in the ballroom has given place to a very expensive wireless set which one of the waiters knows how to operate, there is never any notepaper in the writing-room, and the sheets are not long enough for the beds. Philbrick pointed out these defects to Paul as he sat with Grimes and Mr. Prendergast drinking cocktails in the Palm Court before dinner.

"And it isn't as though it was really cheap," he said.

Philbrick had become quite genial during the last few

days. "Still, one can't expect much in Wales, and it is something. I can't live without some kind of luxury for long. I'm not staying this evening, or I'd ask you fellows to dine with me."

"Philbrick, old boy," said Grimes, "me and my pals here have been wanting a word with you for some time. How about those yams you spun about your being a shipowner and a novelist and a burglar?"

"Since you mention it," said Philbrick with dignity, "they were untrue. One day you shall know my full story. It is stranger than any fiction. Meanwhile, I have to be back at the Castle. Good night."

"He certainly seems quite a swell here," said Grimes as they watched him disappear into the night escorted with every obsequy by the manager and the head-waiter. "I daresay he could tell a story if he wanted to."

"I believe it's their keys," said Mr. Prendergast suddenly. It was the first time that he had spoken. For twenty minutes he had been sitting very upnght in his gilt chair and very alert, his eyes unusually bnght, darting this way and that in his eagerness to miss nothing of the gay scene about him.

"What's their keys, Prendy ! ?"

"Why, the things they get given at the counter. I thought for a long time it was money."

"Is that what's been worrying you? Bless your heart, I thought it was the young lady in the office you were after."

"Oh, Grimes!" said Mr. Prendergast, and he blushed warmly and gave a little giggle.

Paul led his guests into the dining-room.

"I haven't taught French for nothing all these years," said Grimes, studying the menu. "I'll start with some jolly old fruitres."

Mr. Prendergast ate a grape-fruit with some difficulty.

"What a big orange!" he said when he had finished it.
"They do things on a large scale here"

The soup came in little aluminium bowls. "What price the ancestral silver!" said Grimes. The Manchester merchants on the spree who sat all round them began to look a little askance at Paul's table.

"Someone's doing himself well on bubbly," said Grimes as a waiter advanced staggering under the weight of an ice-pail from which emerged a Jeroboam of champagne. "Good egg! It's coming to us."

"With Sir Solomon Philbrick's compliments to Captain Grimes and congratulations on his approaching marriage, sir."

Grimes took the waiter by the sleeve. "See here, old boy, this Sir Solomon Philbrick -- know him well?"

"He's here quite frequently, sir."

"Spends a lot of money, eh."

"He doesn't entertain at all, but he always has the best of everything himself, sir"

"Does he pay his bill."

"I really couldn't say, I'm afraid, sir. Would you be requiring anything else?"

"All right, old boy'. Don't get sniffy. Only he's a pal of mine, see."

"Really, Grimes," said Mr. Prendergast, "I am afraid you made him quite annoyed with your questions, and that stout man over there is staring at us in the most marked way."

"I've got a toast to propose Prendy, fill up your glass. Here's to Trumpington, whoever he is, who gave us the money for this binge."

"And here's to Philbrick," said Paul, "whoever he is!"

"And here's to Miss Fagan," said Mr. Prendergast, "with our warmest hopes for her future happiness!"

"Amen," said Grimes.

After the soup, the worst sort of sole. Mr. Prendergast made a little joke about soles and souls. Clearly the dinner-party was being a great success.

"You know," said Grimes, "look at it how you will, marriage is rather a grim thought."

"The three reasons for it given in the Prayer-book have always seemed to me quite inadequate," agreed Mr. Prendergast. "I have never had the smallest difficulty about the avoidance of fornication, and the other two advantages seem to me nothing short of disastrous."

"My first marriage," said Grimes, "didn't make much odds either way. It was in Ireland. I was tight at the time, and so was everyone else. God knows what became of Mrs. Grimes. It seems to me, though, that with Flossie I'm in for a pretty solemn solemnization. It's not what I should have chosen for myself, not by a long chalk. Still, as things are, I suppose it's the best thing that could have happened. I think I've about run through the school-mastering profession, I don't mind telling you. I might have found it pretty hard to get another job. There are limits. Now I'm set up for life, and no more worry about testimonials. That's something. In fact, that's all there is to be said. But there have been moments in the last twenty-four hours, I don't mind telling you, when I've gone cold all over at the thought of what I was in for."

"I don't want to say anything discouraging," said Mr. Prendergast, "but I've known Flossie for nearly ten years now, and -- "

"There isn't anything you can tell me about Flossie that I don't know already. I almost wish it was Dingy. I suppose it's too late now to change. Oh dear," said Grimes despondently, gazing into his glass. "Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! That I should come to this!"

"Cheer up, Grimes. It isn't like you to be as depressed

as this," said Paul.

"Old friends," said Gnmes -- and his voice was charged with emotion -- "you see a man standing face to face with retribution. Respect him even if you cannot understand. Those that live by the flesh shall perish by the flesh. I am a very sinful man, and I am past my first youth. Who shall pity me in that dark declivity to which my steps inevitably seem to tend ? I have boasted in my youth and held my head high and gone on my way careless of consequence, but ever behind me, unseen, stood stark Justice with his two-edged sword."

More food was brought them. Mr. Prendergast ate with a hearty appetite.

"Oh, why did nobody warn me?" cried Gnmes in his agony. "I should have been told. They should have told me in so many words. They should have warned me about Flossie, not about the fires of hell I've risked them, and I don't mind risking them again, but they should have told me about marriage. They should have told me that at the end of that gay journey and flower-strewn path were the hideous lights of home and the voices of children. I should have been warned of the great lavender-scented bed that was laid out for me, of the wisteria at the windows, of all the intimacy and confidence of family life. But I daresay I shouldn't have listened. Our life is lived between two homes. We emerge for a little into the light, and then the front door closes. The chintz curtains shut out the sun, and the hearth glows with the fire of home, while upstairs, above our heads, are enacted again the awful accidents of adolescence. There's a home and family waiting for every one of us. We can't escape, try how we may. It's the seed of life we carry about with us like our skeletons, each one of us unconsciously pregnant with desirable villa residences. There's no escape. As individuals we simply do not exist. We are just potential home-builders, beavers and ants. How do we come into being? What is birth?"

"I've often wondered," said Mr. Prendergast.

"What is this impulse of two people to build their beastly home? It's you and me, unborn, asserting our presence. All we are is a manifestation of the impulse of

family life, and if by chance we have escaped the itch ourselves, Nature forces it upon us another way. Flossie's got that itch enough for two. I just haven't. I'm one of the blind alleys off the main road of procreation, but it doesn't matter. Nature always wins. Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! Why didn't I die in that first awful home? Why did I ever hope I could escape?"

Captain Grimes continued his lament for some time in deep bitterness of heart. Presently he became silent and stared at his glass.

"I wonder," said Mr. Prendergast, "I wonder whether I could have just a little more of this very excellent pheasant?"

"Anyway," said Grimes, "there shan't be any children; I'll see to that."

"It has always been a mystery to me why people marry," said Mr. Prendergast. "I can't see the smallest reason for it. Quite happy, normal people. Now I can understand it in Grimes' case. He has everything to gain by the arrangement, but what does Flossie expect to gain? And yet she seems more enthusiastic about it than Grimes. It has been the tragedy of my life that whenever I start thinking about any quite simple subject I invariably feel myself confronted by some flat contradiction of this sort. Have you ever thought about marriage -- in the abstract, I mean, of course?"

"Not very much, I'm afraid."

"I don't believe," said Mr. Prendergast, "that people would ever fall in love or want to be married if they hadn't been told about it. It's like abroad no one would want to go there if they hadn't been told it existed. Don't you agree?"

"I don't think you can be quite right," said Paul, "you see, animals fall in love quite a lot, don't they?"

"Do they?" said Mr. Prendergast, "I didn't know that. What an extraordinary thing! But then I had an aunt whose cat used to put its paw up to its mouth when it yawned. It's wonderful what animals can be taught.

There is a sea-lion at the circus, I saw in the paper, who juggles with an umbrella and two oranges."

"I know what I'll do," said Grimes. "I'll get a motor bicycle!"

This seemed to cheer him up a little. He took another glass of wine and smiled wanly. "I'm afraid I've not been following all you chaps have said. I was thinking. What were we talking about?"

"Prendy was telling me about a sea-lion who juggled with an umbrella and two oranges."

"Why, that's nothing! I can juggle with a whacking great bottle and a lump of ice and two knives. Look!"

"Grimes, don't! Everyone is looking at you."

The head-waiter came over to remonstrate. "Please remember where you are, sir," he said.

"I know where I am well enough," said Grimes, "I'm in the hotel my pal Sir Solomon Philbrick is talking of buying, and I tell you this, old boy if he does, the first person to lose his job will be you! See?"

Nevertheless he stopped juggling, and Mr. Prendergast ate two peaches Melba undisturbed.

"The black cloud has passed," said Grimes, "Grimes is now going to enjoy his evening."

CHAPTER XIII

The Passing of a Public School Man

SIX days later the school was given a half-holiday, and soon after luncheon the bigamous union of Captain Edgar Grimes and Miss Florence Selina Fagan was celebrated at the Llanabba Parish Church. A slight injury to his hand prevented Paul from playing the organ. He walked down the church with Mr. Prendergast, who, greatly to his dismay, had been instructed by Dr. Fagan to give away the bride.

"I do not intend to be present," said the Doctor. "The whole business is exceedingly painful to me."

Everybody else, however, was there except little Lord Tangent, whose foot was being amputated at a local nursing-home. The boys for the most part welcomed the event as a pleasant variation to the rather irregular routine of their day. Clutterbuck alone seemed disposed to sulk.

"I don't suppose that their children will be terribly attractive," said Beste-Chetwynde.

There were few wedding presents. The boys had subscribed a shilling each and had bought at a shop in Llandudno a silver-plated teapot, coyly suggestive of art nouveau. The Doctor gave them a cheque for twenty-five pounds. Mr. Prendergast gave Grimes a walking-stick -- "because he was always borrowing mine" -- and Dingy, rather generously, two photograph frames, a calendar, and a tray of Benares brassware. Paul was the best man.

The service passed off without a hitch, for Grimes's Irish wife did not turn up to forbid the banns. Flossie wore a frock of a rather noticeable velveteen and a hat with two pink feathers to match.

"I was so pleased when I found he didn't want me to wear white," she said, "though, of course, it might have been dyed afterwards."

Both bride and bridegroom spoke up well in the responses, and afterwards the Vicar delivered a very moving address on the subject of Home and Conjugal Love.

"How beautiful it is," he said, "to see two young people in the hope of youth setting out with the Church's blessing to face life together, how much more beautiful to see them when they have grown to full manhood and womanhood coming together and saying, 'Our experience of life has taught us that one is not enough.' "

The boys lined the path from the church door to the lychgate, and the head prefect said, "Three cheers for

Captain and Mrs. Grimes!!"

Then they returned to the Castle. The honeymoon had been postponed until the end of term, ten days later, and the arrangements for the first days of their married life were a little meagre. "You must do the best you can," the Doctor had said, "I suppose you will wish to share the same bedroom. I think there would be no objection to your both moving into the large room in the West Tower. It is a little damp, but I daresay Diana will arrange for a fire to be lighted there. You may use the mormng-room in the evenings, and Captain Grimes will of course have his meals at my table in the dining-room, not with the boys. I do not wish to find him sitting about in the drawing-room, nor, of course, in my library. He had better keep his books and gown in the Common Room, as before. Next term I will consider some other arrangement. Perhaps I could hand over one of the lodges to you or fit up some sort of sitting-room in the tower. I was not prepared for a domestic upheaval!"

Diana, who was really coming out of the business rather creditably, put a bowl of flowers in their bedroom, and lit a fire of reckless proportions, in which she consumed the remains of a desk and two of the boys' play-boxes.

That evening, while Mr. Prendergast was taking "Prep" at the end of the passage, Grimes visited Paul in the Common Room. He looked rather uncomfortable in his evening-clothes.

"Well, dinner's over," he said "The old man does himself pretty well."

"How are you feeling?"

"Not too well, old boy. The first days are always a strain, they say, even in the most romantic marriages. My father-in-law is not what you might call easy. Needs thawing gently, you know. I suppose as a married man I oughn't to go down to Mrs. Roberts?"

"I think it might seem odd on the first evening, don't you?"

"Flossie's playing the piano, Dingy's making up the

accounts, the old man's gone off to the library. Don't you think we've time for a quick one?"

Arm in arm they went down the familiar road.

"Drinks are on me to-night," said Grimes.

The silver band were still sitting with their heads together discussing the division of their earnings.

"They tell me that married this afternoon you were?" said the stationmaster.

"That's right," said Grimes

"And my sister-in-law never at all you would meet whatever," he continued reproachfully.

"Look here, old boy," said Grimes, "just you shut up. You're not being tactful. See? Just you keep quiet, and I'll give you all some nice beer."

When Mrs. Roberts shut her doors for the night, Paul and Grimes turned back up the hill. A light was burning in the West Tower.

"There she is, waiting for me," said Grimes. "Now it might be a very romantic sight to some chaps, a light burning in a tower window. I knew a poem about a thing like that once. Forget it now, though I was no end of a one for poetry when I was a kid-- love and all that. Castle towers came in quite a lot. Funny how one grows out of that sort of thing."

Inside the Castle he turned off down the main corridor.

"Well, so long, old boy! This is the way I go now. See you in the morning." The baize door swung to behind him, and Paul went up to bed.

Paul saw little of Grimes during the next few days. They met at prayers and on the way to and from their classrooms, but the baize door that separated the school from the Doctor's wing was also separating them. Mr. Prendergast, now in unchallenged possession of the other easy-chair, was smoking away one evening when he

suddenly said,

"You know, I miss Grimes. I didn't think I should, but I do. With all his faults, he was a very cheery person. I think I was beginning to get on better with him."

"He doesn't look as cheery as he did," said Paul. "I don't believe that life 'above stairs' is suiting him very well."

As it happened. Grimes chose that evening to visit them.

"D'you chaps mind if I come in for a bit" he asked with unwonted diffidence. They rose to welcome him. "Sure you don't mind? I won't stay long."

"My dear man, we were just saying how much we missed you. Come and sit down."

"Won't you have some of my tobacco?" said Prendergast.

"Thanks, Prendy! I just had to come in and have a chat. I've been feeling pretty fed up lately. Married life is not all beer and skittles, I don't mind telling you. It's not Flossie, mind, she's been hardly any trouble at all. In a way I've got quite to like her. She likes me, anyway and that's the great thing. The Doctor's my trouble. He never lets me alone, that man. It gets on my nerves. Always laughing at me in a nasty kind of way and making me feel small. You know the way Lady Circumference talks to the Clutterbucks -- like that I tell you. I simply dread going into meals in that dining-room. He's got a sort of air as though he always knew exactly what I was going to say before I said it, and as if it was always a little worse than he'd expected. Flossie says he treats her that way sometimes. He does it to me the whole time, damn him!"

"So? I expect he means it," said Paul, "and anyway I shouldn't bother about it."

"That's the point I'm beginning to feel he's quite right. I suppose I am a pretty coarse sort of chap. I don't know anything about art, and I haven't met any grand people, and I don't go to a good tailor, and all that I'm

not what he calls 'out of the top drawer. ' I never pretended I was, but the thing is that up till now it hasn't womed me. I don't think I was a conceited sort of chap, but I felt as good as anyone else, and I didn't care what people thought as long as I had my fun. And I did have fun, too, and, what's more, I enjoyed it. But now I've lived with that man for a week, I feel quite different ! I feel half ashamed of myself all the time. And I've come to recognize that supercilious look he gives me in other people's eyes as well."

"Ah, how well I know that feeling," sighed Mr. Prendergast.

"I used to think I was popular among the boys, but you know I'm not, and at Mrs. Roberts's they only pretend to like me in the hope I'd stand 'em drinks. I did, too, but they never gave me one back. I thought it was just because they were Welsh, but I see now it was because they despised me. I don't blame them. God knows I despise myself. You know, I used to use French phrases a certain amount -- things like savoir faire and Je ne sais quoi. I never thought about it, but I suppose I haven't got much of an accent. How could I? I've never been in France except for that war. Well, every time I say one of them now the Doctor gives a sort of wince as if he's bitten on a bad tooth. I have to think the whole time now before I say anything, to see if there's any French in it or any of the expressions he doesn't think refined. Then when I do say anything my voice sounds so funny that I get in a muddle and he winces again. Old boy, it's been hell this last week, and it's worrying me I'm getting an inferiority-complex. Dingy's like that. She just never speaks now. He's always making little jokes about Flossie's clothes, too, but I don't think the old girl sees what he's driving at. That man'll have me crazy before the term's over."

"Well, there's only a week more," was all that Paul could say to comfort him.

Next morning at prayers Grimes handed Paul a letter.

"Irony," he said.

Paul opened it and read:

John Clutterbuck & Sons ,

Wholesale Brewers and Wine Merchants

My Dear Grimes ,

The other day at the sports you asked whether there was by any chance a job open for you at the brewery. I don't know if you were serious in this, but if you were a post has just fallen vacant which I feel might suit you. I should be glad to offer it to any friend who has been so kind to Percy. We employ a certain number of travellers to go round to various inns and hotels to sample the beer and see that it has not been diluted or in any way adulterated. Our junior traveller, who was a friend of mine from Cambridge, has just developed DT's and has had to be suspended. The salary is two hundred a year with car and travelling-expenses. Would this attract you at all? If so, will you let me know during the next few days?

Yours sincerely,

Sam Clutterbuck

"Just look at that," said Grimes. "God's own job, and mine for the asking! If that had come ten days ago my whole life might have been different."

"You don't think of taking it now?"

'Too late, old boy, too late. The saddest words in the English language."

In "break" Grimes said to Paul. "Look here, I've decided to take Sam Clutterbuck's job, and be damned to the Fagans!" His eyes shone with excitement. "I shan't say a word to them. I shall just go off. They can do what they like about it I don't care."

"Splendid !" said Paul, "It's much the best thing you can do."

"I'm going this very afternoon," said Grimes.

An hour later, at the end of morning school, they met

again. "I've been thinking over that letter," said Grimes. "I see it all now. It's just a joke."

"Nonsense," said Paul. "I'm sure it isn't. Go and see the Clutterbucks right away."

"No, no, they don't mean it seriously. They've heard about my marriage from Percy, and they're just pulling my leg. It was too good to be true. Why should they offer me a job like that, even if such a wonderful job exists?"

"My dear Grimes, I'm perfectly certain it was a genuine offer. Anyway, there's nothing to lose by going to see them."

"No, no, it's too late, old boy. Things like that don't happen." And he disappeared beyond the baize door.

Next day there was fresh trouble at Llanabba Two men in stout boots, bowler hats and thick grey overcoats presented themselves at the Castle with a warrant for Philbrick's arrest. Search was made for him, but it was suddenly discovered that he had already left by the morning train for Holyhead. The boys crowded round the detectives with interest and a good deal of disappointment. They were not, they thought, particularly impressive figures as they stood in the hall fingering their hats and drinking whisky and calling Dingy "Miss".

"We've been after 'im for some time now," said the first detective, "Ain't we, Bill?"

"Pretty near six months. It's too bad, his getting away like this. They're getting rather restless at HQ about our travelling expenses."

"Is it a very serious case?" asked Mr. Prendergast. The entire school were by this time assembled in the hall. "Not shooting or anything like that?"

"No, there ain't been no bloodshed up to date, sir. I oughtn't to tell about it, really, but seeing as you've all been mixed up in it to some extent, I don't mind telling you that I think he'll get off on a plea of insanity. Loopy,

you know."

"What's he been up to ?"

"False pretences and impersonation, sir. There's five charges against him in different parts of the country, mostly at hotels. He represents himself as a rich man, stays there for some time living like a lord, cashes a big cheque and then goes off. Calls 'isself Sir Solomon Philbrick. Funny thing is, I think he really believes his tale 'isself. I've come across several cases like that one time or another. There was a bloke in Somerset what thought 'e was Bishop of Bath and Wells and confirmed a whole lot of kids -- very reverent, too."

"Well, anyway," said Dingy, "he went without his wages from here."

"I always felt there was something untrustworthy about that man," said Mr. Prendergast.

"Lucky devil," said Grimes despondently.

"I'm worried about Grimes," said Mr. Prendergast that evening. "I never saw a man more changed. He used to be so self-confident and self-assertive. He came in here quite timidly just now and asked me whether I believed that Divine retribution took place in this world or the next. I began to talk to him about it, but I could see he wasn't listening. He sighed once or twice and then went out without a word while I was still speaking."

"Beste-Chetwynde tells me he has kept in the whole of the third form because the blackboard fell down in his classroom this morning. He was convinced they had arranged it on purpose."

"Yes, they often do."

"But in this case they hadn't. Beste-Chetwynde said they were quite frightened at the way he spoke to them. Just like an actor, Beste-Chetwynde said."

"Poor Grimes! I think he is seriously unnerved. It will be a relief when the holidays come."

But Captain Grimes's holiday came sooner than Mr. Prendergast expected, and in a way which few people could have foreseen. Three days later he did not appear at morning prayers, and Flossie, red-eyed, admitted that he had not come in from the village the night before. Mr. Davies, the stationmaster, confessed to seeing him earlier in the evening in a state of depression. Just before luncheon a youth presented himself at the Castle with a little pile of clothes he had found on the seashore. They were identified without difficulty as having belonged to the Captain. In the breast pocket of the jacket was an envelope addressed to the Doctor, and in it a slip of paper inscribed with the words:

"Those that live by the flesh
SHALL PERISH BY THE FLESH!"

As far as was possible this intelligence was kept from the boys

Flossie, though severely shocked at this untimely curtailment of her married life, was firm in her resolution not to wear mourning. "I don't think my husband would have expected it of me," she said.

In these distressing circumstances the boys began packing their boxes to go away for the Easter holidays.

THE END OF PART I

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